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THE PRIMITIVISM OF WORDSWORTH

by Irving Babbitt

DIFFERENT ages have different ways of being pedantic or, if one prefers, of losing their sense of proportion. A favourite way in our own age is to attach an exaggerated importance to the merely historical and biographical element in literary criticism. What should at most be the frame of the picture has tended, as some one has put it, to take the place of the picture itself. The critic offers as a substitute for an estimate of an author's work minute inquiry into his life; at his worst he sinks to the level of gossip—often malignant gossip.

This unbalanced type of criticism has been especially evident in recent studies of the romantic movement and can indeed be shown to derive largely from it. The more important of these studies have been listed, along with the older material, by Doctor Ernest Bernbaum in his *Guide Through the Romantic Movement*, the first volume of his useful five-volume anthology of the English romantics and pre-romantics.* The question forces itself upon one whether Doctor Bernbaum's own critical judgement has kept pace with his historical scholarship when he asserts that the study of the romantic movement "should be the most illuminating literary discipline the world has ever known". As appears from the context, he has been led to make this singular statement by the fact that it is possible to immerse oneself more completely in historical and biographical detail in dealing with the romantics than it is with the writers of the remoter literary epochs.

The investigators have been especially busy of late with Wordsworth and his background in the eighteenth century, with results that are often of interest in their proper subordinate place. It is now possible to see his poetry as part of a continuous development—to follow, for example, the sentimental deism of a Shaftesbury, as it appears in his *Rhapsody on Nature*, until it passes by almost insensible stages into the emotional pantheism of *Tintern Abbey*. New light has been thrown on Wordsworth's own development by Professor de Selincourt's volume containing hitherto unpublished versions of the *Prelude* (especially the redaction of

* Thomas Nelson & Sons (1929-30).

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1805) along with the text that finally appeared in 1850. The modifications Wordsworth introduced into the successive versions frequently reflect the changes in his outlook on life from his youthful radicalism to the Anglican orthodoxy of his old age.

An especially choice morsel for the ultra-biographically inclined, it is scarcely necessary to say, has been the unearthing by Professors Harper and Legouis of the facts concerning Wordsworth's liaison with Annette Vallon during his early residence in France (1792). Professor Legouis indeed appears to have felt at least passing qualms* at having allied himself with what one is tempted to call the Paul Pry school of criticism. His enjoyment of one of the best sonnets in English ("It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free") seems to have been impaired by his knowledge of the fact that Wordsworth meant it, not for his sister Dorothy, as had hitherto been supposed, but for his natural daughter Caroline. "The sonnet offers", he says, "a striking example of the way in which Wordsworth was wont to solemnize the most profane passages of his life. . . . There is indeed a wonderful forgetfulness of contingencies, a rare lack of self-compunction in the father, a fragile sinner, who transforms himself into a sovereign pontiff".

In the meanwhile, if we are to judge by the two most recent volumes on Wordsworth, one by Herbert Read† and the other by the late Professor C. H. Herford,‡ there has been along with all this bustle of research into his life retrogression rather than advance in the critical estimate of his poetry. Both books are written with distinction and contain much that is acceptable in detail. The contrast in point of view is not only that between two individuals but between two generations. Mr. Herford is an unusually complacent humanitarian of a familiar nineteenth-century type. He not only exalts a kindred "idealism" in Wordsworth during what he terms the "golden years", but also the type of nationalism that appears in the tract on *The Convention of Cintra.* Mr. Read, on the contrary, is inclined to regard Wordsworth in this tract as the "prophet of a polity that reached its natural conclusion in the world war of 1914-1918". In general Mr. Read does not take Wordsworth's philosophy seriously. He is more interested in tracing the "tortuous development of his mind through the ten years that elapsed between his passion for Annette Vallon, and his marriage with Mary Hutchinson". The drift away from critical evaluation towards biographical irrelevancies has received a fresh impetus in his case from his acceptance of psycho-analysis. This means practically that he tends to interpret even what seems most impersonal in Wordsworth's poetry in terms of Annette Vallon. For example, if Wordsworth lost faith in France it was "because he was transferring to this symbol France the effects of his cooling affection for Annette". Mr. Read does not pause to consider that during the last decade of the eighteenth century numerous other radicals with no Annettes in their background suffered precisely the same loss of faith in France when it ceased to be the "champion of human kind" and grew imperialistic. One should add that Mr. Read does not think any the less highly of Wordsworth because in his own phrase "the greatness of his poetry is grounded in animal passions". On the contrary, the quality of this poetry seems to him "not much lower than Shakespeare's".

The appropriate comment on Mr. Read's attempt to dispose of Wordsworth psychoanalytically would seem to be the celebrated one of Jeffrey: "This will never do". Without disdaining any subsidiary aid that may be derived from biography one must agree on the whole with Wordsworth when he declares that poetical works "contain within themselves all that is necessary to their being comprehended and relished", and, one

* See his *Wordsworth in a New Light*, p. 42.
† Jonathan Cape, 1930.
‡ Dutton, 1930.

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may add, judged. Few poets have ever striven harder than Wordsworth to be philosophical. In itself his ambition to write verse that was not only delightful but wise was perfectly legitimate. One's opinion as to the measure of his success will depend on what one thinks of the philosophy he held during his most creative years (approximately 1797 to 1807), a philosophy which may be defined as primitivism. As I remarked in a recent BOOKMAN (April, 1931), primitivism won its decisive triumphs in the eighteenth century. By their denial of a transcendent element in man Locke and others seemed to have written over what had been traditionally regarded as the ascending path to wisdom: No thoroughfare. The rationalism that they offered as a substitute was found to be unsatisfying; above all, it did not satisfy man's deep-seated craving for immediacy: so that presently he began to turn for this immediacy and also, as he hoped, for wisdom, to the region of impulse and emotion that lies below the rational level. What this primitivistic tendency to look for one's illumination backwards and downwards instead of forwards and up meant in the case of Wordsworth has been excellently put by M. Legouis: "Forth step the ignorant and illiterate, whose senses, not yet distorted by analysis, yield them immediate perception of the world . . . ; above all, children, still half enveloped in the mystery which is the origin of every creature. . . . But the train of those restored to honour is not yet ended. There follow those in whom all purely intellectual light appears extinct—the crazy and the idiotic, to whom the common people, perhaps not wrongly, attribute inspiration, and from whom even the wise may learn much, for none can say beforehand what phrase will issue from their lips; and since the utter impotence of so-called rational beings is admitted, may it not be that these will presently let fall words not less profound than mysterious? And though human beings have now passed by, the procession still continues. Shall the multitudes which the philosophy of a Descartes would proscribe, the animals which cannot reason, be set aside on account of so insignificant a deficiency? They possess the principle of life; they possess instinct. . . . Nor is even this enough. Plants also have their joys and sorrows; they live and feel; they speak a language which the poet should strive to understand and to interpret".

Wordsworth's primitivism, one needs to recollect, is not only a reaction from the excess of abstract and analytical reasoning that had been encouraged during the period of European culture known as the Enlightenment, but also from neo-classic decorum and imitation. Neo-classic decorum was a far-reaching principle that the poet had to observe in all things, from his choice of words to his choice of subject if he was to attain elegance and nobility. The conventional elegance he thus sought to achieve—I am of course stating neo-classic practice at its worst—he applied to his work from without as a sort of pigment or veneer. To change the metaphor, the relation of language to poetry was conceived to be mechanical, like that of a garment to a body, rather than vital, like that of a body to an informing soul. The result was the "gaudiness and inane phraseology" which Wordsworth laments. His remedy for this artificiality is primitivistic to the last degree. Instead of being conventionally elegant and imitative, poetry is in his own phrase to be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". This emotional spontaneity is to be found in those who are nearest to nature in the primitivistic sense, so that we must look for the true language of poetry not, like the neo-classicist, to the top but to the bottom of society; to the peasantry, in short, especially to a peasantry like that of the Lake Country which is in immediate contact with "the beautiful and permanent forms of nature". One may make a selection of the real language of men that will be poetical without the addition of any vain ornaments. In other words, the language

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of verse is not to differ essentially from that of prose.

Wordsworth's views as to the language of poetry varied considerably at different periods of his life and in his actual practice he tended to depart from it widely at all periods. As an example of a poem that is primitivistic not only in its language but in its subject one may cite *The Idiot Boy*. This poem is to be read in the light of Wordsworth's letter to John Wilson (Christopher North). The idea of nature, he tells us, had been unduly restricted by a decorum that is not only artificial but heartless. For this exclusiveness based on conventional associations of nobility and lowness we should substitute an all-inclusive sympathy. We shall then be able to develop not only a fellow-feeling for idiots but even to discover in them an element of sublimity. He is ready to apply to them the phrase of Scripture: "Their life is hidden with God". The idiot in Wordsworth's tale, not being disturbed by his "meddling intellect", is able to give himself up to the spontaneous enjoyment of nature. Wordsworth enters sympathetically into this enjoyment; so that Byron is not entirely wrong when he writes

> That all who view the "idiot in his glory",
> Conceive the Bard the hero of the story.

By his discarding of conventional decorum in favour of the humble and the lowly the primitivist hopes to achieve not only sympathy and spontaneity but wisdom. Traditionally we have been taught to look up for wisdom to certain great masters of the past, to Christ or Buddha or at the very least to an Aristotle or a Plato. In his poem *Resolution and Independence* Wordsworth tells us that in his moments of spiritual stress he will "think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor". (It does not appear from Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, by the way, that the leech-gatherer who is the subject of this poem was in real life either "resolute" or "independent".)

An even more primitivistic poem than *Resolution and Independence* is *Peter Bell*. The ass in this poem is extolled not only as a suitable object for sympathy but because he is himself sympathetic and therefore wise. Peter Bell aspires to become wise after the same fashion. He lifts his head—and sees the ass

> Yet standing in the clear moonshine;
> "When shall I be as good as thou?
> Oh! would, poor beast, that I had now
> A heart but half as good as thine!"

At the end of the poem Peter Bell achieves his wish.

Nature herself is conceived by Wordsworth not as "red in tooth and claw" but as a source of love and pity. In *Hartleap Well* she casts a blight upon the spot that had witnessed the cruelty of the hunters to the hart:

> This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
> His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

Even more fundamental in Wordsworth, therefore, than the idea of sympathy is the idea of naturalness and spontaneity. Those who have not yet fallen away from Nature into sophistication possess, one is tempted to say, the artless wisdom of the unconscious. Hence a chief aspect of Wordsworth's primitivism is his cult of childhood:

> Our simple childhood sits upon a throne
> That hath more power than all the elements.

In a recent volume Professor Arthur Beatty of the University of Wisconsin has traced the influence on Wordsworth of the eighteenth-century utilitarian and associationist, David Hartley. According to Hartley, man passes through three stages, each an advance on the last, a progression that Professor Beatty illustrates from the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. Unfortunately the poet's heart is not in accord with his head in this matter. One may not, like Señor Madariaga, feel the line "In years that bring the philosophic mind" as an anti-climax, as "the most abrupt fall that ever broke the back of an

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ode", but it is plain that the poet's heart does not acquiesce in this sober conviction as to the blessings of the philosophic mind. His heart is rather with the vanished spontaneity of the child, "the hour of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower".

One should hasten to add that Wordsworth not only theorizes about spontaneity but often actually achieves it. One cannot read the best of the verse that he wrote during his inspired period without feeling that the contrast between the artificial and the natural that is all-pervasive in the primitivistic movement is something more than a philosophical speculation. Matthew Arnold, who has done more than any other one person to mould our conception of Wordsworth, has rightly emphasized this point. His verses at their best have, he says, the virtue of inevitableness. Arnold has described admirably in his *Memorial Verses* the total effect of Wordsworth's primitivism when it thus receives perfect expression:

> He found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round;
> He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
> He laid us as we lay at birth
> On the cool flowery lap of earth,
> Smiles broke from us, and we had ease;
> The hills were round us, and the breeze
> Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
> Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
> Our youth returned; for there was shed
> On spirits that had long been dead,
> Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
> The freshness of the early world.

It is well to remember that in this matter of inevitableness or spontaneity the gap between Wordsworth's best poetry and his worst is abysmally wide: and even in poems that may seem to some sufficiently inevitable there is room apparently for difference of opinion. Thus Señor Madariaga, whose place among recent Wordsworthian critics is that of devil's advocate, says by way of comment on the ode *To a Skylark* beginning

> Up with me! up with me into the clouds!—

"It is the false elation of an elderly clergyman trying to be playful with the schoolboys". In general, however, Arnold is not only right in praising what is best in Wordsworth's verse for its spontaneity but he has shown an almost infallible tact in disengaging this truly inspired verse from the mass of uninspired or half-inspired verse in which it is embedded. The weakness of Arnold's essay is its failure to define the quality of Wordsworth's inspiration. Leslie Stephen had praised Wordsworth for his systematic philosophy. Arnold discovers little merit in Wordsworth's systematic philosophy, but at the same time accords him high praise as a critic of life. The systematic and poetically unsound Wordsworth makes a special appeal, he tells us, to the class of persons we should call "uplifters".

This whole attempt to distinguish between Wordsworth's systematic philosophy, expressed in uninspired verse, and his criticism of life, expressed with poetic inevitableness, will scarcely bear serious scrutiny. On the contrary, Wordsworth is often poetically most admirable in the very passages in which he seems most dubious as a philosopher, or, if one prefers, as a critic of life. At all events, one's views on this subject will be determined by one's attitude towards primitivism. Consider for example the two poetically felicitous little poems *The Tables Turned* and *Expostulation and Reply*, perhaps the most extreme expressions of primitivism in English literature, so extreme, indeed, that according to some they are to be interpreted humorously. We are naturally incredulous of any interpretation that involves the ascription to Wordsworth of a sense of humour, especially in view of the fact that the argument of these poems is not so very different from that of other poems that he undoubtedly meant to be taken seriously. Some of the characteristic stanzas of the two poems, it will be recalled, are as follows:

> Nor less I deem that there are Powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;

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That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

* * *

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

One may note in passing that the second of these stanzas, truly Wordsworthian in its inevitableness, is, considered as a criticism of life, about the most complete denial of culture in Arnold's sense to be found in literature. The last stanza brings us back to the revolt from rationalism in the name of instinct and feeling of which I have already spoken. Man should, according to the primitivistic Wordsworth, unite with Nature, for this union is union with the Divine. This union is hindered, however, by the intellect and its importunate analysis, by its tendency to see things, not vitally and synthetically, but "in disconnection dead and spiritless". Moreover the man who analyzes loses his natural goodness and instinctive rightness of feeling. He will presently be ready "to peep and botanize upon his mother's grave".

Emotionalism as a substitute for thought is implied indeed in Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". To be sure Wordsworth adds that the poet should be a man who "has thought long and deeply", but read a line or two further and you will find that, following Hartleyan psychology, he looks upon our thoughts themselves as only "the representatives of all our past feelings". Coleridge and others who wished to avoid the charge of having substituted emotionalism for thought adopted the nebulous German metaphysical distinction between a higher synthetic reason (*Vernunft*) and the uninspired analytical understanding (*Verstand*). Practically the abdication of the keen discriminations of the understanding, however uninspired, is the abdication of thought. The primitivist has been able to persuade himself of the contrary only by a perversion of the very forms of language, by a twisting of such words as mind and reason from their tried and traditional sense. As an example of this tendency one may mention the recent volume of Mr. F. C. Prescott, *The Poetic Mind*. Mr. Prescott achieves in his view of poetry a sort of blend of Wordsworth and Freud. Mind in its ordinary meaning he turns over to the man of science and the man of business. One becomes creative, on the other hand, and achieves "poetic mind" only in so far as one surrenders passively to the subconscious stream of imagery.

The kind of revery that results may indeed be poetical; in Wordsworth himself it is often profoundly poetical; but it is precisely in dealing with revery that one needs to display discrimination, true mind, in other words, and not poetic mind in Mr. Prescott's sense. The reputation of Wordsworth either as philosopher or critic of life will finally stand or fall according to the truth or falsehood of a single assumption, namely, that the spiritual life of man has its necessary support in the fresh and vivid perceptions of sense, that each natural object has, in addition to its ordinary meaning, a transcendental significance that makes it relevant to man and his special needs. As a result of this linking of sight with insight the return to Nature of the primitivist takes on the aspect of a religion. Wordsworth in particular is thus enabled to declare:

. . . if in this time
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature,
. . . the gift is yours,
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
Ye Mountains! thine, O Nature! . . .

We are all familiar with the admirable lines in which Wordsworth dwells

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On that best portion of a good man's life
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love.

We do not always recollect that, when read in their context, these lines contain the suggestion that the acts of love may be in no small measure an emanation of the landscape. This assertion that the moral ends of man are forwarded by a union with nature, that one may even thus achieve the love which is the fulfilment of the law, would seem to call for the keenest exercise of what Wordsworth himself terms "the false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions". If we thus discriminate we may find that the nature cult can assume this religious aspect only as the result of a confusion between pantheistic revery and genuine meditation. Wordsworth himself came to have doubts about communion with nature as a basis for the moral and spiritual life of man. At the time of writing the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* he is already turning away, though regretfully and with many a longing, lingering look behind, as I have already said, from the primitivistic gospel of pure spontaneity. The *Ode* occupies a position in his life somewhat similar to that occupied by the *Ode on Dejection* in the life of Coleridge. The source of Coleridge's melancholy is the discovery that communion with nature is no equivalent for the truths of the inner life:

It were a vain endeavour
Though I should gaze forever
On that green light that lingers in the west;
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

The first retreat of Wordsworth on making a similar discovery as to the inadequacy of the gospel of spontaneity is to Stoicism. (*Ode to Duty* and *Laodamia*) and then finally to traditional religion (*Ecclesiastical Sonnets*). Our last picture of him is with his white head bowed in the little church at Grasmere. During this last period he not only became the reactionary and "the lost leader", but in almost the same measure was forsaken by his muse.

Is it not possible without becoming in any way a reactionary to raise certain doubts about the religious pretentions of the primitivist? Is it not possible, in other words, to discriminate on purely psychological grounds between pantheistic revery and genuine meditation? In attempting this discrimination we may best fix our attention on Wordsworth's phrase "a wise passiveness". We have already seen that the transcendental vision that the primitivist hopes to achieve by communion with nature involves a certain abdication of the intellect. The phrase "a wise passiveness" raises an even graver problem than that of the intellect, the problem, namely, of the will. It goes without saying that the person who engages in revery is outwardly idle. Is he not also guilty of a far subtler form of idleness? Genuine meditation would seem to differ from revery precisely in the fact that it is a form of effort, a putting forth of a higher will and not merely "a wise passiveness".

Why, it may be asked, should we consider matters so curiously? Why not enjoy *Tintern Abbey*, for example, simply as poetry without concerning ourselves about its philosophy? What practical difference does it make after all whether one confuses pantheistic revery with genuine meditation? The answer to this question bears directly on a problem that was Wordsworth's lifelong concern—the problem of happiness. It is all to his credit that in the very age of romantic melancholy, when every poet was trying to outvie his fellow poets in forlornness, in making a "pageant of his bleeding heart", he insisted that poets should be the happiest of men. Now it is an impressive fact that the chief religions of the world, notably Christianity and Buddhism, associate happiness not with a wise passiveness but with a wise strenuousness. Like Wordsworth the truly religious person sets as his goal "joy in widest common-

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ality spread", only he would base this communion not upon spontaneous emotional overflow nor upon the "impulse from a vernal wood" but upon the exercise of a higher will.

Mr. F. C. S. Schiller of Oxford recently affirmed that, though we may not have succeeded in adding to the seven deadly sins, we have at least got rid of some of them—for example, the sin that the mediaevals termed *acedia*, which may be defined as the gloom that follows upon spiritual sloth. A sufficiently keen psychological analysis might reveal, quite apart from theological affirmations, that, so far from our having got rid of *acedia*, it is our pet and peculiar failing. Professor Joseph Warren Beach raises a similar issue when he declares that "Wordsworth on his old gray stone is occupied much like Buddha beneath his sacred Bo-tree", or like the college professor "on his summer vacation". Perhaps the best reply to such an assertion is to quote some characteristic utterance of Buddha—for instance, the following: "By rousing himself, by strenuousness, by temperance and self-control the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm".

The exercise of the higher will has been very much associated in historical Christianity with God's will, in other words, with the doctrine of grace. Wordsworth affirms paradoxically that grace, by which alone man can, according to the Christian, become truly transcendent, in other words capable of rising above Nature, is on the contrary the only means by which he may unite with nature:

> . . . By grace divine,
> Not otherwise, O Nature! we are thine."

The danger of this scheme of salvation is that it may lead to the setting up of a subrational parody of the charity that is at the heart of genuine Christianity and which traditionally has been inseparable from grace. The "nature" of Wordsworth and other primitivists which both feels and inspires love is evidently not nature as known to the realistic observer, but an idyllic dream. Practically this means that, if one is to arrive at a sound estimate of Wordsworth, one must deal not only with his attitude towards the intellect and the will but must also define the quality of his imagination. The word imagination may be applied first of all, as it has been ever since the Greeks, to the various impressions of sense which are in Wordsworth's case often admirably vivid (especially the visual impressions). It does not follow that the wonder of natural appearances which he has rendered with such success can take the place of the homage of awe and reverence and humility that we owe to that within us which transcends natural appearances. The union with nature as something essentially religious which both Wordsworth and Coleridge made the basis of their distinction between fancy and imagination must therefore be itself dismissed as fanciful. Wordsworth himself contrasts two types of imagination—on the one hand, the "enthusiastic and meditative", and on the other "the human and dramatic"; and he evidently includes himself among the poets who are enthusiastic and meditative in the quality of their imagination. The epithets enthusiastic and meditative would seem to apply especially to a poet like Dante, but his enthusiasm and meditation are surely not on the whole of the same type as Wordsworth's. Unlike him he is primarily not an idyllic but a religious poet; as a Christian he is preoccupied above all with the problem of man's will both in itself and in its relation to God's will. Nothing could be more foreign to the true spirit of the *Divine Comedy* than the doctrine of a wise passiveness. Dante is not merely a greater poet than Wordsworth—so much I think we should all grant—but if the distinctions I have been attempting are just, it would follow that his superiority is not merely one of degree but of kind.

It is plain that if Wordsworth's imagination is not, on the whole, of the religious type, it is even less of the type that he him-

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self terms human and dramatic. Perhaps no great poet ever saw life less dramatically than Wordsworth. The sonnet on London seen from Westminster Bridge is not only successful, it is splendidly successful. At the same time there is a certain element of paradox in treating a great city as a study in still life. To take another instance, the subject of *The White Doe of Rylstone* would seem to call for a direct portrayal of the clash of human wills and the violent deeds that result; on the contrary Wordsworth is not content until he has converted the whole situation into "emotion recollected in tranquillity". *The Excursion* has claims to be regarded as the least dramatic long poem in literature. Its crowning incident, as has been remarked, is "tea at the vicarage". Just as I have expressed the opinion that Wordsworth differs by the quality of his vision or imagination from a religious poet like Dante, so I venture to affirm that he differs from poets like Shakespere and Sophocles, who are imaginative in the human and dramatic way, not merely in degree but in kind. Other things being equal, a poet who dwells imaginatively on the humanistic or the religious level seems to deserve a higher rating than the poet who is engaged imaginatively in a return to nature. "Last and pre-eminently", says Coleridge, "I challenge for this poet (i.e. Wordsworth) the gift of IMAGINATION in the highest and strictest sense of the word." Coleridge has been followed in this view by so many and such weighty authorities that, in suggesting that Wordsworth's imagination is not after all of the highest type, I am like Doctor Johnson in his attack on the three unities, appalled by my own temerity.

The critic, it is true, cannot afford to be exclusive. According to Anatole France, pantheism is the most poetic of all ways of viewing life. One may at least admit that Wordsworth and other primitivists have shown that it may be abundantly poetical. Moreover Wordsworth cannot be dismissed as a merely pantheistic poet. He is guilty at times of the "egotistical sublime" of which Keats accused him, but at other times he achieves the elevation that is the mark of a truly religious spirit—an elevation that he often proceeds to associate more or less arbitrarily with "the light of setting suns", or the equivalent. In general it is not unusual for the great romantics to combine flashes of genuine insight with pantheistic revery. There is an especially baffling mixture of this kind in a writer who was influenced in a notable degree by Wordsworth—our own Emerson. In one poem he declares that there are "two laws discrete not reconciled—law for man and law for thing". In another poem he assures us that the humble bee is "wiser far than human seer", an example of "immortal leisure". As we approach the present the insight diminishes and the pantheistic confusion grows. I choose a few illustrations almost at random. Last September one of the leading Protestant pastors of Boston expressed his sense of religion by having placarded in front of his church the following lines by W. H. Carruth:

> A haze on the far horizon,
> The infinite, tender sky,
> The ripe, rich tint of the cornfields,
> And the wild geese sailing high,—
> And all over upland and lowland
> The charm of the golden rod,—
> *Some of us call it Autumn,*
> *And others call it God* [my italics].

In his recent volume, *The Modern Dilemma*, Mr. Hugh I'Anson Fausset makes a plea "for a true reconciliation of heart and head in imaginative understanding, a true at-one-ment with the spiritual source and reality of all being, by virtue of which nature is perceived as supernatural and the *life of a flower is in its degree as beautiful and inevitable a mystery as the life of Jesus*" [my italics]. The primitivist seeks at times to dissimulate his spiritual idling under grandiose imagery:

> Oh, subtle is the sap athrill,
> Athletic is the glad uplift,
> *A portion of the cosmic will,*
> *I pierce the planet drift* [my italics].

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Primitivism of this kind may do very well as a week-end and holiday attitude. It can be received as serious philosophy only at the expense of a certain quality of will and imagination. In his *A Cycle of Modern Poetry* Professor G. R. Elliott has pointed out with admirable perspicacity how this quality of will and imagination is compromised by Wordsworth's virtual denial of the mysterious duality of human experience in favour of a single life that "rolls through all things". If the poet, he says, is to learn once more to see life either religiously or dramatically, he needs to turn from Wordsworth to Milton and the Elizabethans at their best—for example, to the Shakespeare of *Macbeth*. Without denying the validity of the avenue of escape that Professor Elliott offers the poet from what he terms "the dying orbit of the nineteenth-century mind and art", it is well to remember that the problem we are here concerned with is, before being a poetical, a human one, and that it is possible to deal with this problem not merely traditionally, but critically, or, what amounts to the same thing, to affirm the higher will for which the primitivist offers a subrational substitute, as a living and present perception.

Wordsworth is "well pleased to recognize in nature and the language of the sense" the "guide" and "guardian" of all his "moral being". Saint Bonaventura, though very ready on occasion to interpret religiously natural appearances, yet affirms finally that "the soul knows God without the support of the outer senses". Here, if anywhere, is a clash of first principles. If there is to be any recovery of the truths of the inner life it may be necessary to work out some positive psychological equivalent of the form of immediacy implied in the utterance of Saint Bonaventura, and then oppose it to the Wordsworthian immediacy. I have in mind of course the needs of those persons who are unable simply to acquiesce in traditional authority and who yet see the peril of naturalistic confusion. The first and most urgent task of those who wish to escape from this confusion in truly modern fashion would seem to be to rehabilitate the "secondary power" of discrimination that Wordsworth so disparaged, in other words, to develop a more trenchant type of criticism.

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STRIPPED REALITY

by Arthur Colton

THE storm hangs glowering over the Hudson, and beyond it over the innocent lights of Dobbs Ferry. There the good folk are playing golf in the long twilight of Daylight Saving, while

> The thunder hurries slow;
> The lightning shows a yellow beak,
> And then a livid claw.

Dobbs Ferry is all but in the grip of ravening doom. There is a dramatic pause. It is a significant arrangement, a good bit of literary projection. The younger generation has a school of criticism which objects to such obvious effects (see Mr. Humbert Wolfe's *Dialogues and Monologues*). Their less sophisticated elders were pleased with anything in nature with a kick in it, with anything in literature that transferred the kick. But I was thinking there might be more than one way of drawing poetry out of electrical phenomena. Emily Dickinson's was the old way. Her thunder bird is older than Thor's hammer or the proclamations of Zeus. The simple minded Athenian of Aristophanes, drawing on his own experience with jack puddings, was easily persuaded to hear the rumbling of divine bowels. All good in their several ways. But the objection is made that these obsolete fancies have no vitality left in them: if we cannot get our feet on reality and talk like men, poetry is a bursted soap bubble. And there is something in that

But, now, as respects this reality. We are told with authority that all substance is composed of small electrical centers, little nuclei of excitement, bits of infinitesimal thrill. The reality, then, on which we must plant our positive feet, is something electric. That zigzag flash—there goes reality! One can hardly, in this world of trappings and illusions, see it anywhere stripped more nearly to the bone. That is what drives the universe. That essentially is the physical universe. Reality is something like a flash, substance the trail that it leaves. Is there no transferable kick in reality zigzagging over Dobbs Ferry? As an approach to poetry it is not so bad. It is at least as grim as the thunder bird. But it must be admitted that stripped reality is an uncanny sort of thing, insufficiently humanized. One cannot build one's nest and warble love songs to unincorporate power. The poetry it suggests is austere and probably tragic. If we are entering on a new era whose god is electric and its temple a mechanism, there is a deal of adjustment to be done.

I once knew a Ford car that was successfully humanized. Her idiosyncrasies were highly developed, her personality more than definite. She was eccentric and yet lovable. She balked when it pleased her, and started again only at the impulse of a new idea. One approached her to suggest, not to command. With age and growing infirmity her character became but the more vivid and emphatic. Her cushions were indented with the shapes of humanity, her mudguards with the

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vicissitudes of a contentious life. Her voice, which in youth had been "gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman", in age developed accents of violence and distress. Never while in action would she cease complaint, but with increase of speed her protests rose from intonations of discontent to those of profanity, and at the limit of her mileage to a sort of chant, wild, combative, and yet melancholy, defiant but tragic.

> The Eternal Sákí from that Bowl has poured
> Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

So do the Ford factories. But the parallel suggests, and the biography of Juba supports the idea, that even in mechanism there is hope. It is a Purgatory but not an Inferno. Those bubbles are ourselves, and quantity production did not deny to us our personalities, nor to Juba hers. If to argue that that which inspires affection must also feel it were to consider too curiously, dipping logic in mysticism, at least affection can entwine an automobile. Imagination can ask in respect to a locomotive, "Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" It can speak Jehovic scorn of any cocky mechanic's opinion. The budding bough on my apple tree is not less mysterious than Moses's rod, but it is more usual. There is less surprise in it and more beauty. Men in a world of mechanism will have no difficulty in putting vision into the world they know, when they come to know it. An automobile is no more mechanical than a house, and a man can love his house as well as his dog. Beauty is only the stepchild of surprise. Its legitimate parents are custom and intimacy.

Well, lightning is customary, but it is not intimate. Ultimate things are unhomelike. Stripped reality is as uncanny as a miracle.

II

The social psychologist or practicing psychiatrist, who talks of suggestion and suggestibility, uses new words—or more or less new—for old things. "Big medicine" they used to say; or more recently, "There is a power not ourselves"; or, by way of a simile less reverent than either, human society is like a pipe organ—you touch a key and maybe nothing happens, and maybe it roars like a bull. If you ask an editor why he wrote about the home-coming of Bobby Jones, or the murder of Jane Doe and the complex clues pointing to Richard Roe, he says it was because everyone else was doing it; news is what people are interested in. He regards the interest as antecedent and causal to his article. If you call on the propagandist or advertising expert for light on the dark secrets of publicity, haply he says: "Why, it's this way, brother. There are two ways of getting the public. You may pound one spot till you make a dent, or you may strike a nerve".

Out of the mouth of the hard-boiled comes the admission of a mystery. Pounding to make a dent seems intelligible. The virtue of persistency has many a formula. But the other dental metaphor—the theory of a social nerve, of society in possession of a tooth with a cavity and a root connection into its whole sensitive system and responsive soul—is an idea full of spacious conjecture. The wind bloweth where it listeth; so does everything born of the spirit. The wind is sometimes a cyclone, and a cyclone is merely wind. The summer breeze is as problematic as the black tornado, or the long drift of the Trades. The simile implies that mystery is as inherent in the little as in the large. Moreover social phenomena are less calculable than atmospheric ones, less traceable along the lines of their causes and probabilities. When the social nerve is struck, and a thrill shoots down it like lightning through a cloud; when suggestibility becomes Corybantic, and a sensation goes racing and roaring across the country like a funnel-shaped tornado; or when it travels more slowly, drifting and pervasive, like a storm area chronicled by the Weather Bureau; or when the spirit of an age changes to that of another with the gradual movement and continued pressure of a trade

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wind; or when some sentiment, wordless and unintentioned, passes from one person to another like a soft breeze on the cheek—we do not know what happens in any of these cases. Nor more so for the invention of a new terminology.

Nor more so when the mystery wears the garments of mechanism. The wave of understanding or shiver of fear that runs through a flock of sheep is recognizably the same thing when it runs through the human crowd. When it rides the air on wireless waves and leaps from continent to continent; when it jiggles and glimmers in a thousand moving pictures; or appears simultaneously everywhere as news, syndicated or associated; the magnitude of the thing ought to be awesome. It asks for poets and prophets to say something imaginative and sonorous, like deep calling to deep with the noise of waterspouts. One can do very well with African drums throbbing news across the jungle, more insistent and solemn than a funeral bell. The trouble with old wine in new bottles is that it tastes of the new bottles. What the ghostly voice in the radio is most insistent and solemn about is that the whole thing is in the employ of the Atwater-Kent Company or the International Soap Incorporated. These be your gods, O Israel! Yonder box with the ominous dial is an Ark of the Covenant, charged with miracle. You turn the dial finger to certain gnomic symbols, WXYZ or the like, and a Voice from the Silence cries, "Glory and honour and power be to them that sit upon the thrones!" However, that is neither here nor there.

Because I know, or can guess, somewhat of the agencies and channels the impulse makes use of, and can speak lightly of them, I do not know yet whether suggestibility is an electric phenomenon, or "a power not ourselves that makes for" something, or whether both are not indefinite enough to mean the same thing. It seems to be "Big Medicine", with a zigzag activity as unpredictable as a short circuit. "Listen, brother," says my hypothetical advertiser. "You either pound for a dent or strike for a nerve." His analogy should go on to the effect that relentless drilling is sure to strike a nerve sooner or later, but on this point he is pessimistic: "Like as not there ain't any nerve. It's dead, dammit! You sink a barrel of money, and no oil". You cross the ocean for the first time by aeroplane, like Alcock and Brown, but glory is absent-minded at the moment. The ears of publicity are still deafened by the thunders of war. You advertise Belle Oeil Cosmetic patiently, expensively, impetuously, imperiously, and the public in dumb multitude buys Astrakan Face Powder instead, possibly because there is less risk in pronouncing Astrakan than Oeil.

III

Social dynamics! Suggestibility! Do they happen to mean anything? And if they do, does it happen to be other than electrons gyrating in curious combination? In that speculative world I do not seem to find footing. "You pound for a dent or you strike for a nerve." Now, there is a formula with ginger in it, no glassy-eyed staring at the abstract or infinitesimal. It cuts into memory and experience, and draws blood. Why, it's the epitome of education! Education is duplex and the marriage of two species. One learns the multiplication table from repetition, and the value of life from a thrill. Our stores of information, habits of mind and automatic skill of hand and foot, were pounded in. There were thousands of lessons, precept on precept, practice on practice; their circumstances are forgotten but their dents remain. On the other hand, there were moments when one was not learning but discovering; when a long level beam shot through a slit in the clouds, "under the opening eyelids of the morn"; when something without and something within short-circuited with a flash. One can almost date his intellectual or moral or aesthetic life from one of those flashes. From one of them starts the trail which every vivid and productive life

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has at some time struck and followed. They occur under the most unlikely circumstances. You must take them as they come. "Veni, Creator Spiritus! Come with thy quickening power", is an invocation to genius. "Sing, Heavenly Muse!" For we know the ritual of religion. We know the mechanics of poetry, so many beats to a line, such and such arrangements and diversities of quantity. We know how the beautiful is put together according to Longinus *et al.*, down to Benedetto Croce. We know about unity of interest and the dangers of purple patches. We know the doctrine of the verslibrists. Our pens run freely and there is all the world to write about. But, O Heavenly Muse, Creator Spiritus! O mad mysterious something blowing where it listeth! Without you it is all a rattle of dried peas in a fool's bauble. The lovely and the sordid lie side by side, and the nightingales sing " 'jug, jug' to dirty ears". The waters of Castaly flow under desert sands that will grow no green thing without them. Wagons not hitched to stars go nowhere that matters. Routine is as easy as the road to hell, and may be the same thing. But a quickening spirit knows no road, broad or narrow, nor gate of any kind. It travels cross-lots and suddenly is not there. If society is a bony structure, its nervous system is no system at all, and no physiology can make head or tail of it. What and where, O advertiser expert and experienced, is that nerve aforesaid? "I don't know what, brother, and I don't know where till I strike it according to my notion of what's likely. But I know it's a live wire, and there's more money in it than in a gold mine."

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like, eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all—but He remains. . . .

Or, as Mr. Bernard Shaw sees it down vistas of Methuselah, "in the end the whirlpool becomes all life and no matter. Of life only there is no end". Nowadays the two powers, electrical and emotional, ride on wireless waves. Power mounts on the back of power and delivers itself out of black boxes with dials. One does not know whether the two powers are one in essence or in origin (the zigzag flash and the sudden fear, the momentary glow in the black cloud and the quick warmth in the heart), or utterly different in both; and neither does it matter. If communicant power is the last reality, the thing that is with us alway even unto the end of the world, I do not much care whether it is one or they are two. When the old dualism comes up with its garments refurbished, we stare at it as though we had never seen it before. The elder philosophy asserted that matter and mind were essentially different realities, but it hedged with the qualifying amendment that there was, if not an *entente cordiale*, at least a practical understanding between them. The newer philosophy seems to hold that "the world is a pattern of events, not a realm of things", and that matter and mind are not essentially different. Pragmatically speaking, it seems to make no difference whether they are different or not different. They both come out of the dark, and in the dark everything looks alike. If the old forms of spirituality have broken down, and the convictions expressed in the old creeds have wilted under inspection; if there is no divinely inspired church or scripture, and no knowledge whatever of what happens to mortality; if the loss of the old forms and faiths leaves us suspicious of everything that cannot be pinned down, and yet restless as with the loss of a settled habit; still life does not feel any more like super-mechanics than it did before. If matter and thought are forms of the same energy, you might as well think of it as "thought" as think of it as "push". Near at hand they seem to be two species. But it doesn't matter whether you run your dualism all the way back and split your primal energy into two, or let it blend in one. It depends on which way you can think better.

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Anyway my nerve is still a live wire. I can still read of

> . . . one who on a winter's night
> Takes a long slumber by a dying fire,
> A loath to part from it,

and in that reminiscent flash find myself with John Webster, the Elizabethan, by his dying fire, of one mind with him, thinking one thought. This flash seems to be the same in nature as that which makes ten thousand people (from one advertisement portraying a cosmetic lady in her happiness and bloom) suddenly begin to buy Astrakan Face Powder; or causes ten millions to be electrified by the thought "Knute Rockne is dead", or "Lindbergh has reached Paris"; and whether it is electrical in nature or only in metaphor, it illuminates the darkened landscape and provokes ejaculation. What an extraordinary universe! All flashes and dents! To get our feet on reality is to get back of the dents to the flashes. Reality is always; and always a surprise; its trails only are ephemeral and commonplace.

IV

"We must get our feet on reality and talk like men." Very good. But reality is not the breakfast dishes, nor the details of Monday's wash; neither is it the truth about Spoon River epitaphs, nor the empty shell of Shelleyan liberalism debunked, nor the universe desiccated to a mechanism. When you "get down to beans", you find that reality is a flash or a thrill, and to talk of getting your feet on it is not to talk like a man but to talk like a child. It's the very thing you never can get your feet on. You can only get them on the illusions. You can be as intimate as that with the dents it leaves, but not with the thing itself. You can exchange badinage with an automobile, but not with an electron. The livid streak splits its cloud, and is followed by its due crash and rumble, miraculous and yet usual. There goes reality! Thereby hangs the cosmos. Zigzag streaks run through the body social, throbbing rumours, shoots of pain and anger, radiations of laughter, crashes of excitement, mutters of expectation and disappointment. There also goes reality! Thereby hang the law and the prophets. History is its reverberation and poetry the attempt to give it a name. It flows down the centuries. It jumps from John Webster to me. The deep that calleth unto deep is the spirit of one man calling to another across longer and longer distances of time and space. What an extraordinary universe! Too curious for a young man to feel dull in. And as for the old, theirs is the regret that their time is too short to grow used to the new vision of it. But then, they are used to regret.

Sooner or later a disillusioned age begins to suspect that its disillusionment is illusory. The "hard world of fact" is a romance. Reality is not like a rock. It is more like a flash. The rock that Doctor Johnson kicked in refutation of Berkeley deceived him grossly. He kicked an illusion. It appeared to be simple and dead, whereas it was really complex and alive. It may be that we are "in for" a literary period more like the age of Dryden and Pope than like the age of Coleridge and Keats. But that means an unrealistic age, an age of illusions. It thinks the dent is the reality, and not the something or other that made it; that what a man does is reality, and what he dreams is not. It thinks all beliefs ecstatic or fanatic are weak, and disbeliefs strong, and that too is unreal. You are strong where you admire and believe. Where you don't there is no force at all. Men who believe in science are strong there, and those who believed that *"Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott"* were strong there. The romantic era was not an age of weaklings. In the last analysis it was as realistic as the age which invented or appropriated the word. Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* is more realistic than Mr. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. That looks like a paradox, but it expands into ordinary common sense.

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The *Ode* is a rush of feeling, and a rush of feeling is a stripped reality. It is complex in prosody, musically complex, and its garment of form is coloured saffron and crimson and purple. But the garment is as diaphanous and clinging as the tunic of Cleopatra. You are very close to the naked reality of feeling. Mr. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is plain, not to say harsh, in prosody, but it is as elaborately artificial, as ruffed and petticoated as Queen Elizabeth. At bottom it is also a rush of feeling. The stripped reality is there when you have stripped it. Like Elizabeth it uses language or reference that would have shocked Victoria, but that does not make it more realistic, any more than it proves Elizabeth more human than Victoria. At bottom Elizabeth was a very real person, but intellectually and politically, she was puzzling. She was as hidden in her mind as she was in her clothes. Her features were a bit harsh. The *Ode* is garmented like Cleopatra, and its features are Greek, though wearing the "shadowed livery of the burnished sun". Its complexion is too dusky for a Greek. Both queens, both poems, are actually very subtle. If we call the Egyptian more natural, or the *Ode* more realistic, we mean that nature or reality comes nearer to the surface. The first impressions are more nearly like what they really are. The *Ode* is patently a rush of feeling, as Cleopatra was visibly a woman. The rush of feeling in *The Waste Land* is as inferential as Elizabeth behind her crinoline. Incidentally, Cleopatra and the *Ode* had more of what both Greek and Romantic poets were wont to call "beauty". But they did not think it was an incidental thing, only skin deep. They thought it vital and central. If the Romantics did not say there was more realism or reality in Keats than in Crabbe, in Blake than in Pope; that Wordsworth was more realistic when he wrote of "the light that never was, on sea or land", than when he observantly described how an ass's ear twirls round on the pivot of his skull, we have here been edging toward the position where we can say it, and mean something, "with our feet on reality, talking like men".

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THE PAST AND FUTURE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

by Granville Hicks

With *Sanctuary*, his seventh book and his sixth novel, William Faulkner moves toward the reputation that a few critics predicted for him five years ago when *Soldiers' Pay* was published. That reputation, based though it is on this his most recent novel, points correctly to the two qualities that are most conspicuous in and most characteristic of all his fiction: his preoccupation with unpleasant subjects and his experimental approach to the novel as a form. Admirers of *Sanctuary*, now turning back to Mr. Faulkner's earlier writings, are unlikely to be either surprised or disappointed; some of the subjects, they will find, are more horrible and some less, just as the methods are sometimes less ingenious and sometimes more so; but the fundamentals both in content and in form are consistently the same.

Even in their superficial aspects, his six novels give evidence of homogeneity: all of them are located in the South, and four are placed in and about a single small town, which he calls Jefferson, in northern Mississippi. This Jefferson he has populated in his own fashion, introducing several of its citizens in more than one book—Horace Benbow, for example, or fat Dr. Peabody, or the ubiquitous Snopes family. But thematic homogeneity is even more notable. Except for *Mosquitoes,* which is, as will be shown, no real exception, his novels are, at least in the looser sense of the word, tragic. In all the other five death is central, and in all these five some form of sexual irregularity furnishes either the major or a minor theme. Four have leading characters suffering from some form of mental disease, and in three the sexual irregularities are associated with pathological symptoms. Suicide or murder figures in three. The world of William Faulkner echoes with the hideous trampling march of lust and disease, brutality and death.

How persistently a single mood dominates his work becomes clear if we examine that apparent exception to the rule, *Mosquitoes*. Here Faulkner essayed a venture under the guidance of the comic spirit; a study, after the manner of Aldous Huxley, of futility. His intention is quite apparent; so apparent that his failure upon the level of that intention cannot be palliated. In telling this story of a group of New Orleans intellectuals unhappily engaged, thanks to the enterprise of a Mrs. Maurier, local patron of the arts, on a yachting trip, he was obviously trying to write a witty and cynical exposure of the pettiness of the human mind, the banality of the intelligentsia, and the general meaninglessness of life. Unfortunately such a study of stupidity itself escapes dulness only if its author has some capacity for the sophisticated manipulation of ideas. Faulkner has none. And yet the book is not a complete fiasco. When he abandons his plans, when he leaves the level of what is meant to be sophistication

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for the level of brutality, *Mosquitoes* becomes interesting. Whatever gifts he lacks, he has, as his handling of the eloped Patricia and David shows, when they are lost in the swamp, suffering from thirst and lacerated by insects, a very pretty talent for the depiction of the ills to which human flesh is liable. Such talents repeatedly reveal themselves and in the end dominate the book. What had started out to be a comedy of futility became instead a wry and bitter record of human suffering.

Thus, despite its author's intentions, Faulkner's second novel allied itself with the tradition established in its predecessor. This first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, takes as its theme the return from the World War of an aviator, shell-shocked and badly wounded, lapsing through oblivion into death. Only incidentally is this a war book; any meaningless catastrophe would have served Faulkner's purposes as well. What he suggests in his account of Lieutenant Mahon's decay, Margaret Powers's passion-emptied mind, Cecily Saunders's stupid greed, and Januarius Jones's goatish strategies is a realm of wanton suffering in which protest and submission are equally comfortless.

Sartoris, coming after the comparative failure of *Mosquitoes*, made no attempt to deviate from the purposes and methods of *Soldiers' Pay*; indeed, it also portrays the return of a soldier, though it is concerned with him rather as a representative of a doomed family than as a returning warrior. *The Sound and the Fury* introduces another family of the damned: of the four children one is an idiot, one commits suicide, one becomes a prostitute, and one is harshly dishonest and insensitively cruel. A third blighted family figures in *As I Lay Dying* —the shiftless father and the mad, unhappy children who attend the body of the mother on its tortuous pilgrimage to the grave. And in *Sanctuary* the principal events are a peculiarly brutal rape, two wanton murders, a lynching, and an execution.

Once started upon his path, Faulkner has not turned back. It is amazing, when one stops to think of it, the pathological range that he has traversed: the shell-shocked Mahon, insane Darl, the feeble-minded Popeye, the idiot Benjy, to say nothing of obsession-ridden Jewel and Vardaman Bundren, Bayard Sartoris, Quentin Compson, and Januarius Jones. Beside these diseased personalities he places his weak and purposeless men—Horace Benbow, Talliaferro, Mahon's father, Bundren—and his lascivious, heartless, unprincipled women—Temple Drake, Cecily Saunders, Patricia of *Mosquitoes*, and Benjy's niece Quentin. With few exceptions, Faulkner's men and women are twisted shapes in the chaotic wreckage of a mad world.

II

Quite as conspicuous as this preoccupation with disease and violence is Faulkner's technical ingenuity. Though his methods were not fully elaborated in any of his first three novels, none is without its structural innovations. The introduction to *Soldiers' Pay*, for example, is uncommonly adroit: instead of beginning with the story of Lieutenant Mahon, Faulkner begins with the meeting between Private Gilligan and Cadet Lowe, both recently discharged from the army; they meet Mahon, and then Mrs. Powers adds herself to the party. Thus Faulkner contrives to suggest, even as he introduces his situation and his characters, the casualness, the lack of design, that gives the novel its dominant tone. As the story goes on, he unfolds brief episodes one after the other, repeatedly changing his point of view so that we see now through the eyes of one character and now through the eyes of another. Gradually the whole situation becomes clear, and yet we are never given any suggestion of a rational, of a more than accidental, organization of events. Faulkner's method deliberately keeps the story remote from him and

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from us; he never tries to deceive us into thinking that we know these characters well, for that we cannot know anyone is part of his philosophy.

For the purposes of *Mosquitoes* the episodic method and the rapidly changing point of view were obviously well suited, and it is not to any technical weakness that the failure of the book should be attributed. *Sartoris* made greater demands upon the technique, for five generations are involved in the story, and too rapid a manipulation of the point of view could only have resulted in confusion. Faulkner avoids the danger by focusing attention on basic Sartoris characteristics found in every generation. As in *Soldiers' Pay*, where the adventures of Januarius Jones are only slightly related to the rest of the story, he introduces a minor theme—the affair between Horace Benbow and Belle Mitchell.

Though not uniformly successful in his first three novels, Faulkner had shown uncommon ingenuity and a remarkable sureness of touch in arranging his materials; but he had done nothing that could prepare the reader for the technical finesse of *The Sound and the Fury*. Adapting the fundamental elements in his earlier method, and both elaborating and adding to them, he achieved as original, as complex, and, on the whole, as well-conducted an experiment in novel-writing as this experimental age has, at least in America, produced.

The book is in four parts, three of which employ the stream-of-consciousness method. In the first and principal section it is the consciousness of an idiot that we are following. In the unusually associative mind of Benjy, the sights and sounds of the [illegible]f April 7, 1928, bring recollections [illegible]d that of the family. From some [illegible]t flash-backs we obtain glimpses [illegible]welve episodes in the life of the [illegible]amily, covering a period of twenty-[illegible]irty years. As he paddles in the [illegible] is completely a child though this is his thirty-third birthday—he goes back to the games he and the other children played on the day his grandmother died; seeing his niece with a man reminds him of his sister's first beau; standing by the gate recalls the long days after his sister was married, when he waited in vain for her return. Not merely do events in the present associate themselves with those in the past; an impression connected with one episode in the past calls up other episodes. So Benjy's mind flows from one buried era to another and back again, until we have seen the Compson family in a dozen different periods in its history, and have come to realize, and even to suspect the reasons for, its decline.

For the second section the story drops back to June 2, 1910, the day on which Benjamin's brother Quentin, then a student at Harvard, committed suicide. We follow the movement of thought and association through his mind on that day, and to the suggestions Benjy has given us we add these new impressions. Then we move to April 6, 1928, observing through the mind of Jason, a younger son and now the mainstay of the family, the present situation of the Compsons. Here it becomes increasingly plain that the central theme is the story of Candace, Benjy's sister and favourite, whose conduct inspired Quentin's suicide and whose daughter, named Quentin for him, now lives with the family. The final episode, presented objectively, rounds out the story by telling how this Quentin, on the night of April 7, ran away with a showman, taking the money of which the ruthless Jason had defrauded her. We follow Jason in his futile pursuit, accompany Benjy and the Negroes to Easter service, and go with the idiot on his weekly pilgrimage to the cemetery.

As was natural, Faulkner did not try to repeat the particular experiment he had made in *The Sound and the Fury*. Instead, in *As I Lay Dying*, he attempted to amplify and formalize the method of brief episodes and shifting point of view that he had made the

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basis of his earlier work. In sixty different episodes he reflects through the minds of fifteen characters the death of Addie Bundren and the prolonged efforts of her family, cut off by a flooded river, to take the body to Jefferson. Each section mingles the observations, associations, reflections, and emotional reactions of the person whose mind is being exposed, and the reader pieces together the story as best he can. As all five of the children, who are vehicles for the greater part of the narrative, are psychologically abnormal, we see events as if on a series of distorted canvases painted by modern artists of a variety of bizarre schools. Yet the burden of the narrative is unfailingly sustained, there is a progressive revelation of character, and the incidents of the journey are clearly defined.

Sanctuary, finally, develops still another phase of the earlier method. Here the episodes are longer, the point of view shifts less frequently, and there is almost no attempt to reproduce the stream of consciousness. But the events narrated are so selected and arranged that the reader has nearly finished the book before he understands how the rape of Temple, the central action of the book, took place, and only the last chapter permits him to understand the psychological antecedents of that crime. *Sanctuary*, then, like the earlier books, forces the reader to reconstruct from piecemeal evidence the actual nature and sequence of events; but Faulkner has made the task enough easier to permit his reader to grasp, without too much effort, the main outlines of the story. He is not, as is likely to be the case in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, distracted by his efforts to disentangle himself, and hence he does not lose the force of the ultimate revelation. Less ingenious than its two predecessors, *Sanctuary* deserves its greater popularity, as a successful adaptation of a difficult method to the actual powers of response that the reader brings. To that extent it is Faulkner's best work.

III

Thus far I have tried to describe Faulkner's novels, not to evaluate them; but his work, as much as that of any living American, cries out for evaluation, and the task is not to be neglected. Can we not, at the very outset, disregard the contention that his subjects count against him? Can we not take it for granted that there is no subject that is inherently and inevitably unsuited for fiction? That should be easy to do if we recall the subjects of Greek tragedy: Clytemnestra's bloody murder of her husband, Electra's fierce revenge, Oedipus's double crime, Laius's infanticide, and Haimon's self-slaughter. Even the mentally diseased have had their place in literature: who can forget, to go no farther in Elizabethan drama, the magnificent scene in which Lear, Edgar, and the Fool seek shelter together from the storm? The question is never what subjects an author chooses but how he treats them.

How should the artist treat insanity and murder and lust? He may, it is clear, treat them, if he has a norm of human conduct, as aberrations from that norm. If he believes in hell, he can, like Dante, make room for the most hideous sinners; that is what hell is for. Such has been, surely, the most common way of finding a place in literature for the crimes to be observed in life; and we may be moderately certain that if Faulkner had chosen this method, if he had shown the evil punished and the good rewarded, we should never have heard any objections to his subject-matter.

But presumably he is unable to take so simple and satisfying a view of the universe, and if so his scepticism is not without dent. The moralist's view of evil only one that has been dignifie phy and poetry. Even the most must have moments when it fe are to the gods as flies to wanton out of such moods men have con view of the universe. When Oed

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> If one should say, this is the handiwork
> Of some inhuman power, who could blame
> His judgement?

he offers an interpretation of the events of the play that seems more reasonable to many modern minds than the commentary of the chorus. How many have felt, like Isabel in Melville's *Pierre*, that "all good, harmless men and women were human things, placed at cross-purposes, in a world of snakes and lightnings, in a world of horrible and inscrutable inhumanities!" Such an attitude may not be consoling, but it cannot be said to be ignoble, and it has inspired literature that is not to be ignored. The wild poetry of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*, the sustained terror of *Wuthering Heights*, the majesty of *The Dynasts*—these bear witness to the distances they can soar who find life a mist of error.

Is Faulkner of this company? One would like to think so; there is something so overwhelmingly persistent in his preoccupation with evil, so starkly resolute in his portrayal of deeds of violence. Surely, one feels, this man purges his own soul and must purge ours; nothing less than a fiery vision of cosmic baseness could inspire so intense and ruthless a summoning forth of all the demons in hell. And then—one hesitates. Is the expected catharsis achieved? Or does the reader stand, terrified and fascinated, but in the deepest reaches of his emotional organization unmoved, watching the horrible panorama unfold itself? "Perhaps", says Horace Benbow in *Sanctuary*, "it is upon the instant that we realize, admit, that there is a logical pattern to evil, that we die." But suppose one never does, in any imaginative way, realize this pattern; suppose it is merely an idea, a notion, perhaps a second-hand notion. Suppose one merely uses the idea, mechanically. One describes the most brutal crimes, arranges them in sequences, heaps them one upon the other. What is the result? Is it tragedy, a tragic vision such as illuminates *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Les Fleurs du mal*? Or is it the succession of *frissons nouveaux* of *Le Grand Guignol*?

So delicate is the question, so personal any attempt to answer it, that we may shrink from too hasty or too positive a conclusion. But how, we may ask ourselves, does Faulkner fare if we compare him with the contemporary whom in choice of subject he most resembles, with Robinson Jeffers, in whose poems is paralleled every offence against human law that Faulkner's novels chronicle? The situations, obviously, are much the same; they affect the reader very differently. The madness of Darl, the suicide of Quentin, the lynching of Lee—these are ends; there is nothing more to be said about them; one reads, shudders, and forgets. But California's encounter with the roan stallion, Tamar's death in the burning house, Barclay's incest, the loving shepherdess's march to destruction—these are beginnings; they lift us above and beyond them. Jeffers has a vision, which expresses itself in symbols of lustful deeds and bloody crimes; Faulkner has strangely focused powers of observation. Jeffers writes the poetry of annihilation, Faulkner the record of thwarted lives and savage deaths. That calm detachment of Faulkner's, superficially so much a virtue, betrays a secret, for if he is not a man possessed, as Jeffers unquestionably is, what is he?

And when the suspicion enters one's mind, how much there is to confirm it! What about Faulkner's experimentalism? Have we here some new, some sharply individual view of life creating for itself new forms, or a keen but mechanical intelligence posing for itself problems that it loves to solve? The forms of Dos Passos's novels, for example, are unmistakably their own justification; one knows the themes could not have been presented in any other way. Faulkner's experiments less clearly authenticate themselves. It is not certain that Benjy was the inevitable narrator of the history of the Compson family, or that the story could only have been

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told in four episodes, or that in the arrangement of these episodes chronological sequence had to be violated. There is a better case for the form of *As I Lay Dying*, for we should be the losers if we could not grasp the mental processes of the Bundren family; but even here there seems to be a wilful playing with the normal processes of narration. In *Sanctuary* there is, in the same way, no inherent reason for withholding the details of Popeye's rape of Temple, especially in view of the regularity with which events have previously been chronicled. What is gained by the throttling of the narrative at this point is a heightening of suspense, a leap in the reader's eagerness to push on with the novel. It is, in short, a mechanical device, making possible the extremely clever arrangement of spaced clues that constitutes the remainder of the story. And precisely the same mechanical aim seems to have dictated the other deviations from normal narrative form that have been mentioned. It would almost appear that Faulkner is playing a game with his readers, a game in which he displays tremendous ingenuity and gives pleasure to the reader by stimulating a like ingenuity on his part.

One wonders, however, in what sense this ingenuity is a literary virtue. One can almost imagine Mr. Faulkner inventing his stories in the regular chronological order and then recasting them in some distorted form. This is a different thing from the kind of arrangement Ford Madox Ford has given to the material in *The Good Soldier*; Ford chose a point of view that would permit a progressive revelation in the course of which certain important facts could be withheld in order to lend the climax a force based on surprise. But, given the point of view, the revelation is natural and inevitable. Faulkner, on the other hand, almost literally writes his stories backward, and what he achieves is not a form rising organically out of the material but an arbitrary pattern. The fascination of a gallery of horrors, multiplied, let us say, by some intricate arrangement of mirrors—is that too unfair an analogy to the effect of William Faulkner's novels upon their readers?

IV

But if Faulkner does not belong in the line of Webster and Baudelaire and Jeffers, there is a tradition with which he is affiliated. It is the tradition, at least so far as America is concerned, of Edgar Allan Poe and Ambrose Bierce. He is like them not merely in his preference for the macabre but also in his preoccupation with formal problems. The resemblance, if we allow for the differences between the short story and the novel and for the influence on Faulkner of contemporary psychologies and the work of such men as Joyce, strikes down into fundamental attitudes. We know that Poe constructed his tales of terror with the mechanical precision of a chess player and cryptogramist, and we suspect that Bierce, with his cheap cynicism and petty sophistries, wrought in a not dissimilar fashion his anecdotes of dying soldiers and ghost-haunted civilians. Both made pretence to a profound and dark philosophy, but neither actually had the range of intellect or the power of imagination out of which philosophies are made. The minds of both were disordered and in a way not unsuggestive of the minds of shrewdly plotting madmen.

Surely this is not the most healthy, the most fruitful tradition for a young writer to ally himself with. The reputation of Ambrose Bierce has not survived the critical examination of his work, and even for Poe admiration must always be sharply qualified. There is no depth, no substance, in the work of either man—merely glittering surface. And both men wore out their minds in the manufacture of these lurid devices, these bizarre assaults upon juvenile sensibilities. Whether there were greater resources there we cannot know, but we can see that the kind of

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work they engaged in would have made no demands upon such resources, which must, supposing them to have existed, inevitably have atrophied.

With Faulkner there is some reason to think that he has resources other than those on which he has thus far depended for his principal and most characteristic effects. There is another side of Faulkner, perhaps an important side. His first published work was a book of poems called *The Marble Faun*. The poetry is not, I fear, very good. It is quiet pastoral poetry of which the most that can be said is that its tone is fresh and pleasant. The mood is a mildly pagan, somewhat pantheistic appreciation of natural beauty. The descriptions are nowhere near so original or so striking as many of the descriptive passages in the novels, but they appear to grow from an honest sensitivity. When Faulkner speaks of the blackbirds like "burned scraps of paper cast / On a lake quiet, deep and vast", or of the "slow exploding oak and beech", or of the moon's "fondling a wayward star", one feels no great power, perhaps, but at least there is an actual and personal emotion to which the reader responds. Mr. Phil Stone, who writes the introduction to the little volume, says justly, "These are primarily the poems of youth and a simple heart". A simple heart—it is not a quality one would have thought of attributing to William Faulkner, but perhaps it is there.

Reading *The Marble Faun* recalls the fact that Faulkner has not always neglected his less macabre talents in his prose. There is the description of the parsonage in *Soldiers' Pay*, of the life of the MacCallums in *Sartoris*, of the children's games in *The Sound and the Fury*. And there are other passages, not so obviously the product of a simple heart, that have a vitality and a kind of veracity that one does not find in the more lurid episodes or the more startling characterizations: the section devoted to Jason in *The Sound and the Fury* is harsh but convincing; shiftless Anse Bundren breathes life into *As I Lay Dying* whenever he appears; the visions of Gordon in *Mosquitoes*, though curiously unrelated to the rest of the story, seem to correspond to some experience of the author's. And it sometimes happens that what one remembers after reading these books is not the bravura passages—Red's funeral, the burning of the barn in which Addie Bundren's body lies, the death of Bayard Sartoris—but the slight, sometimes insignificant passages that bear the stamp of personal experience and imaginative recreation.

To say this is not altogether to belittle the peculiar gifts that have brought Faulkner his reputation. The cold, sharp vividness with which he can describe an assault or a murder argues a talent that is neither common nor insignificant; the vigour with which he can sustain throughout a novel some highly intricate device indicates technical capacities that are not to be scorned. The worst that can definitely be said is that these talents are not subordinated to finer imaginative qualities that would employ them on a level above the merely mechanical. But it is possible to suggest, beyond that, that the continued cultivation of these talents, without the development of the powers that could control them and give them meaning, is likely to end in sterility.

It may be that Mr. Faulkner's facility is his greatest danger; it is too easy for him to produce shudders for him to bother to try to create tragedy. But if, as has been indicated, he actually has skill, though not in such great measure, in the portrayal of persons and scenes such as one imagines to be familiar to him in the daily passages of his life, that may be his salvation. One would like to see what would happen if he attempted something quite unlike what he has been writing in the last few years, something more conventional if you will, certainly something closer to his own experience and easier for his imagination to assimilate. If

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he had the dark genius of a Robinson Jeffers, one could condone, even admire, his abandoning himself to the guidance of his more sensational talents. But no signs of that genius have appeared. What seems to be called for is a fresh start. If he were to ignore for a time his ability to provide thrills, if he were to try to build solidly on so much of life as he understands, permitting the organic needs of his material to guide his ingenuity in the creation of new forms, he might in the end fuse all his talents into some fresh and inclusive and firmly founded attitude toward life. There is, of course, no reason for believing he will do this; but to define our hopes does at least clarify our grounds for dissatisfaction with his past and fear for his future.

MODERN ACCENTS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

by R. A. Scott-James

THE war can be blamed for most of the things that happen in Europe, but not everything. The distinctive notes in modern English literature, which some critics like to call "Georgian", might have been detected at least nineteen or twenty years ago. Two or three years before 1914 a marked change of atmosphere was already noticeable in England. Young and clever men were declaring that they had learnt all that it was necessary to learn from the elders—from veterans like Bernard Shaw and Wells, who were iconoclasts when the century opened, and have worn well through all the changes of recent years. But the younger men were not content to be their satellites. They pushed out in their own way to assert their freedom and modernity.

Of course they did not begin quietly. It was an age of noise, and any new effort had to be announced with a blare of trumpets. It was a sort of mi-carême festival of big drums and little tin whistles and fancy dress. A new show of Post-Impressionist pictures had much the same character and purpose as the marches of flustered suffragettes on Whitehall. Marinetti was attracting attention by his violent denunciations of *Passé-isme* and his rhapsodic proclamations of *Future-isme*, and this—in the new age of motor-cars—inevitably became associated with "Automobilisme". To which, naturally enough, the Vorticist Wyndham Lewis made the retort that it was the English and not the Italians who introduced the Machine Age; and there are some who can remember the victorious appearance of the leader of the Rebel Art Center arriving with a rabble of his followers and the first huge volume of *Blast*, resplendent in its red cover, announcing the dawn of the present age of energy, conflict, and geometric conceptions.

And not far off the Imagists were planning a new era in poetry, and choosing Mr. Ezra Pound as their mascot. They, too, turned disgustedly from all that was "*passéiste*", endeavouring to express with the help of a novel technique a sensibility attuned to the realities of modern life. "Yes, we were right," says Mr. Aldington, looking back

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on the ambitions of himself and his confrères,

To smash the false idealities of the last age,
The humbug, the soft cruelty, the mawkishness,
The heavy tyrannical sentimentality.

And "We are right," he goes on, "when we turn,"

Even if with infinite regret, from the old dead Europe,
And face the hard new world, the world of machines.

One is tempted, in speaking of the period immediately following the war, to look at it too much from this or that angle, or to picture it as dominated by this or that coterie. If one should persistently follow clues of this kind, in an effort to characterize an age that has been so diverse in its tastes, any single clue would lead us astray. Thus we might be tempted to picture the whole of literary London as a sort of fantastic foreground to James Joyce, with the little imps of Jung and Freud whispering terrific secrets in its ears. At another moment we might suppose that all the literary folk had gone into separate corners, and were talking in loud whispers to themselves, like Dorothy Richardson, and reproducing strings of their choicest and most tenuous sensations in books which are classed as novels, that being the label attached to any composition which is not definitely something else.

Or we might decide, once and for all, that this was an age marked by the brilliance of its verse, by those definitely "neo-Georgian" poets who cast off romanticism and the sickliness of pretty rhyme and metre. The most confusing thing about the interesting and attractive poets whom Mr. J. C. Squire so assiduously acclaimed was that there were so many of them; for the judgement recoils from the idea that there are a score of Miltons all at one time shedding lustre on our age. However, it may be taken as definitely a poetic period; poetry had a vogue and a jargon, and a number of distinguished exponents; the conditions were stimulating to young talent.

But it was also as definitely a period of other features. For instance, there was Expressionism, as popularized by Pirandello, and taken up by Miss Glaspell, Mr. Eugene O'Neill and many others, English and American. Or might it not be considered as an age of choice and polished fantasy, with *Lady Into Fox* and *Lolly Willowes* rarefying our commoner sensations with the more exquisite butterfly touches of the imagination? Or was it not even more distinctively an age which redressed the balance of an all too romantic and sentimental world with doses of sane banter, fervour being replaced by epigram, and seriousness by the *mot juste*?

Mr. Michael Arlen might have entered the circle of those who thus charmed by scintillating, had not the crude flash of his limelight disqualified him. At its center was Mr. Aldous Huxley who, with cool crystal words and faultless rhythms, created a new delicious world out of sheer disillusionment; and not far off, Mr. Gerhardi, master of languor and ennui, who wandered so lightly from episode to episode creating a new significance out of the fact that nothing signifies. And the three Sitwells, like three Graces in classic pose, who delicately and without ever insisting too much, have been letting the world into their secret that up to now it has been taking the big things of life too seriously and been too little content with the malleable surface of things and the ripple of words. It was not for nothing that Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell, writing a book about the Middle Ages, discovered their whole character in their tapestries. Decoration, quaint lines and figures, the pale colour of pale northern women, or splashes of the brightest wine-red from the Mediterranean—here, among a host of little things, is the beauty which is the world's ceremonial offering to the Trinity of the Sitwells. And of the three Mr. Sacheverell most completely fulfils their composite destiny, being untroubled by the

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occasionally insistent intellectualism of his brother, Mr. Osbert, and showing, so far as I know, no traces of the occasional asperity of his sister, Miss Edith. He is completely, almost naïvely, himself, moving in a sphere where the smallest of things become vocal and declare themselves in the language of self-conscious art.

It is all gain that the world should become diversified by "such a number of things". And it was certainly time to give a rest—in the sphere of imaginative literature—to the big social problems which had flustered the Edwardians, and to leave morals alone; and to turn to the small things, to whose significance the microscope sets no limits. And if subtlety is sometimes overstrained, suggesting more significances than it is worth our while to attend to—and this was the case with Miss Dorothy Richardson, in her way, and in her quite different way, with Katherine Mansfield—still it is worth remembering that infinity stretches in two directions, towards the infinitesimal as well as the infinite.

In fiction it is not altogether strange that women should have carried off most of the honours. What a list of brilliant writers might be compiled, representing every variety of talent now and again bordering on genius —Miss Sheila Kaye Smith, Miss Rebecca West, Miss Storm Jameson, Miss Rose Macaulay, Miss Delafield, Miss Romer Wilson, Miss Clemence Dane, Miss E. H. Young, Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner and, *facile princeps* on the basis of her achievement, Mrs. Virginia Woolf. And when one has rashly written down these nine or ten names one instantly begins to think of as many more who have an equal claim to be included in any representative list. I know no fact so disconcerting about the good novels of today as their abundance. The chief ground of complaint against that arbitrary institution, the Book Society, is not that it fails to select a good Book of the Month, but that it unfairly penalizes a dozen others, just as good, which have not been selected. It almost seems that any educated woman of clear perceptions, if she is equipped with a sound working knowledge of the rules laid down with neo-classical precision in Mr. Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction*, is capable of writing a faultless novel fit to be the novel of the week, or the month, or the year. That talent, that industry, and Mrs. Sylvia Lynd to put the crown on her head—nothing more is needed.

There are two reasons why I do not think it strange that women should have carried off most of the honours in recent English fiction. First, because it is more often the case with women than with men that they are able to take a direct, personal, immediate interest in the intimate, personal affairs of daily life—seeing life instinctively in terms of the individual. It is their special forte to *perceive* (I am speaking of the imagination) rather than to *conceive*. There are many men whose thoughts, in the words of Miriam in Miss Richardson's *The Tunnel*, are "statements", not "things". The Miriams of the world, when they think of Space, do not see it in the first place "full of glorious stars", but full of "millions of little rooms"—"millions of rooms exactly like this each with one thing different".

But I will not pursue that dangerous topic. Sufficient to say that the distinctive talent of women was peculiarly necessary in fiction if it was to follow a course in direct reaction against a type of fiction which might have been written (say) by Mr. Bernard Shaw—or that much more personal yet still essentially intellectual fiction which *was* written by Mr. Wells and Mr. Galsworthy. Women were bound to dominate fiction when it was demanded that it should deal with the impressions of private daily life in terms of its privacy and its dailiness, and never of the Kosmos.

It may be suggested that this is a vicious circle, fiction tending to pursue this course just because the majority of persons clever enough to write it well were women. But

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may it not be that the post-war tendency in English literature as a whole, and to some extent in English civilisation as a whole, was to assume a form pre-eminently feminine? There was an obvious reason why this should be so—and this is the second reason to which I alluded: the ablest men of the younger generation were killed in the War. It could not be expected, when about half of the most brilliant men who today would be between thirty-two and fifty-five years of age were cut clean out of the nation's life, that the national literature would show the full creative energy that it would have done if those men had survived. And of those who came through some were embittered or preoccupied. Did not Mr. Robert Graves show signs of a power and originality from which anything might have been expected if sour memories of the War had not diverted him from his course? Mr. Siegfried Sassoon has already accomplished much. But how much more, and still better, may he not accomplish when his war experience has become fully adjusted to other experience, and his mind has accomodated itself to the currents of normal life?

I have said that it may be misleading to try to characterize the post-war period by reference to any specific group or coterie. Yet, amid all this diversity of effort, this many-sided experimenting, this considerable body of positive achievement, one does get certain general impressions. These were years, were they not, in which so much of the writing was like conversation that might take place between the intervals of jazz—conversations like those invented by Mr. Noel Coward to fill in gaps—never dull, never too serious, clever always, significant *never*. Or rather, one might or one might not mean something, but at all costs one should be amusing.

Critics like Mr. T. S. Eliot said that we had come back—and there was a sigh of relief—to classicism; but all that was really certain was that we had weaned ourselves from the sickliness of spurious romanticism. Pretty, sugary, sickly this period has certainly not been—except in the cinemas and the serials, which are beside the point. For the great heart of the people has not been a matter of much concern to the intellectuals except when they were writing expensive articles for the popular press; and for whatever they said there they were not held accountable: it was to be taken, like so much else, with a grain of salt.

Sometimes we have felt that we were back in the period of the Restoration, with its affectation of unconcern, its preoccupation with verbal niceties, and its bad good-manners—its debonair gaiety appreciably relieving the tedium of a world vexed with monetary problems and repeated trade depressions. All this tended to banish excess of seriousness from serious subjects; and even the burden of history and biography was lightened when Mr. Lytton Strachey, Mr. Guedalla, and that clever Frenchman who has almost become English, M. Maurois, gave savour to the dusty memories of dead men with their neo-Attic—that is to say, neo-Georgian—salt.

But during all this period when the new Restoration Comedy manner was in fashion the general reading public was giving much of its attention to other things. It found time to read Dreiser. It realized that America was a very important country which was passing through a phase in some ways reminiscent of Englishmen's experiences a generation ago, and in some ways far outstripping them in its readiness to welcome artistic experiments. Englishmen came to *Main Street* and *Babbitt* with the curiosity of persons reading criticism of their own past, and from this turned with amazed approval or disapproval to the modernity of Fannie Hurst or Eugene O'Neill and from these again to the balanced artistry of Willa Cather or Thornton Wilder. They read Feuchtwanger and other German writers. They acquired quite suddenly a taste for orgies of war literature. More recently

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they have been led the full round of the circle, back to the great heart of the people, to the robust picaresque pleasantries of Mr. Priestley.

What changes, what experiments, what comings and goings there have been in the years that have spun themselves out into a whole period since history was cut in two! And yet, all the time, a few of the older men of the last generation remained—Shaw, Wells, and, till last spring, Bennett—those serious but not too serious writers who lived heart and soul in the last generation, but would not and could not be brushed aside by the new; not looking on sardonically at the Brocken revelry, but taking their part among the performers. Here was a new, changing world which they had helped to make. The product might be different indeed from anything they had dreamt of, but at least it was no Frankenstein monster to pounce on its creator and destroy it. The new age, with all its admiration for novelty, has paid even more homage to Shaw, Bennett and Wells than was offered them by their own contemporaries, and has accepted them not as honoured relics of the past, but as still vital forces of the present. Up to now there have been no individuals big enough to challenge their priority or even to offer effective rivalry. Somebody is due to take Bennett's place, but he is not yet visible. It may be that the man designed by nature for the part was killed in the war, or that his spirit was irreparably damaged by it; and the vacancy may have to remain unfilled till somebody, now young, has got his hand in. May it conceivably be Mr. Priestley? To have a million readers is not the qualification we are looking for. At present Mr. Priestley is only a promise, a possibility, one who might go any distance, or might not. We must wait.

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AUTHORS AREN'T SO AWFUL

by Another Publisher

In the July number of this magazine was published a piece entitled *Authors Are Awful.* It was signed "A Publisher". Now, either this publisher was trying to be funny, wrote his article under the influence of an extremely bad digestion, or else he ought never to have entered the publishing business, and now that he is in it, if he really means what he says, he should resign or sell his business tomorrow.

His argument is that, due to one thing and another, authors have become so egotistical that they have neither honesty nor gratitude. They believe publishers to be "a sort of combination of Jesse James, Simon Legree and Shylock". They do all sorts of irritating and impossible things, making the life of the poor publisher a hell peopled by monsters whose typewriters are clicking out a new method of torture. "Other businesses do not have authors," says this anonymous publisher, whoever he is, "and that is their luck."

Ye gods and little fishes! Where would the publisher be without the author? In fact, one great trouble with the profession of writing and the business of publishing is that, up to a certain point, it is too easy. There are some publishers who are too delicate to be in any business. They want an ideal profession, where they will not have to argue over a financial point or enter into the vulgar business of bargaining. Similarly, writers are sometimes made overnight, without knowing anything of the business or the technique of writing and are, naturally, difficult to guide through the mazes of success. A whole book could be written about the indignities which successful authors have to suffer in America.

The public, the authors, booksellers, and publishers themselves are too prone to think of publishing as a thing set apart, something especially invented for gentlemen who do not want to work very hard. This, of course, is far from the truth. The business of selling books is a complicated and wearying and fascinating and perplexing task. So is the editorial side of this business. Perhaps another difficulty which this publisher faces is in not properly combining these two functions of his business. His chief trouble, apparently, is that he doesn't understand human nature and that he has allowed his authors to remain completely *uneducated.* Since he never once considers a book as a *book* in his article, it may be that he himself is completely uneducated in the business of authorship. With the publisher an ignoramus on the one side, and the author on the other, no wonder they get into trouble.

"Authors are awful", he says. Well, what business or profession does he think there is which does not have its unreasonableness, its ignorance and its temperament, its competition, its stealing of clients, its financial ingratitude, its questioning of statements—and many of these pursuits are without the

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extraordinary thrills and compensations of publishing. Sitting on a porch in the country, I brought up this question last night in a group of summer folk highly varied in business and professional connections. They found, they said, something very amateurish in this publisher's viewpoint. After all, consider the banker and the lawyer, what a variety of temperament they must encounter among their accounts and their clients. So far as the financial peculiarities are concerned, authors do have them—so do publishers, so does everyone else. Some men become entirely different persons when it comes to a question of dollars and cents. Some men are born horse-traders—they love it. Some men get a certain emotional compensation out of being hard in a business deal. With others, generosity is a fault. Authors do not differ from anyone else in these respects, and the greatest mystic can turn into a man who loves to fuss for hours over the last penny in a royalty statement. I myself temperamentally dislike bargaining. It is a fault which I recognize; but I do not immediately cast the bargaining author into limbo. I am lucky in having a partner to whom I can turn him over.

Many articles could be written on the author-publisher relation. For example, the development and change in the position of the American publisher has decided bearing on this subject. He is no longer the demigod he once was, and sometimes he forgets this. The magazine and motion picture men are now far more important to the commercially successful author. However, this change has been slow and many factors have entered in.

I admit at once that many of the anecdotes told in *Authors Are Awful* are true, perhaps all of them. Some of them I recognize from experience. Moreover, I could match them with tales of authors' foolishness and malpractice. But the first point I want to make is that there are plenty of stories of the benevolence and gratitude of authors, and that there are plenty more of the irritability and general cussedness of publishers. Second, much of this trouble could be overcome by establishing a proper relation and understanding between the author and the publisher at the start. Third, a book is not entirely a piece of merchandise. On the whole, it is usually more important to its author than to its publisher. This last is a dangerous statement, but I think a true one. An author, after all, works like blazes over a book. It is singularly important to him because it represents part of himself. While I agree that the author who insists on having too much to do with the publication of his book is a nuisance, I completely understand his desire to do so. In this respect a compromise can in most cases be effected. Some of the best ideas for the design and promotion of our books come from the authors themselves. On the other hand, I often say, "Tell us every idea you have. You mustn't mind if we, in turn, explain to you that some of them are impractical".

Most to be feared of anyone on earth is the man or woman who sits down at your desk and says, "I don't know anything about business. I'll just sign this contract here". Sooner or later, they are the most difficult of all. However, the answer is, "All right, then, let's learn what it's all about. Moreover, I insist that you take that contract out and show it to some one who *does know*, so that right at the start our relation is one of *informed confidence*".

The writer of *Authors Are Awful* seemed to expect a sort of blind devotion of author to publisher, which, when it does happen, my dear fellow publisher, can be very embarrassing, can't it?

I don't want this article to sound like a hymn in praise of authors. I don't sign it because I'd be accused of currying favour with authors. I don't know who wrote the other piece. One of our authors accused me of writing it—so you see, sometimes I do have indigestion and talk about how difficult authors are. But, whatever small success I

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may have made in the publishing world has been fostered and aided and made possible by the support of authors. There is no question about it. One of them helped put me through college. Another recommended me for my first job. So on and on.

To match the tale of the ungrateful author who left a hard-up publisher is another, equally well known, of an author who accepted notes for royalties and has helped to pull a certain publisher out of the mire by the success of his own two books. Several important authors have signed up with small publishing houses when those houses had little but the integrity and the ambition of their personnel to recommend them.

I know one publishing house practically all of whose important contracts this autumn were signed with no advances, or purely nominal ones, and on the authors' suggestion, at that.

The author-publisher relation is a delicate and a difficult one. The author's situation in these days is also difficult. He has the possibility of large financial rewards. He wants artistic success. Can he have both? That is only one of the questions he has to answer. The publisher is equally torn by his desire for a distinguished and a profitable list. Here, I could go on for hours, showing all the complications that may arise.

Observing other publishers I see them handling this situation, some in one way, some in another; but more often with wisdom, kindliness, and tact, than otherwise. After all, they know that their bread and butter is at stake.

At its best, I can think of no relationship in life, except marriage, that can be so happy, so constantly refreshing, so exciting in its gambles and successes, so poignant in its failures but so bravely faced as this one.

Some authors are awful—they're *hell*—but so, I am told, are some wives.

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ON TRANSLATION

by Hilaire Belloc

THE art of translation is a subsidiary art, and derivative. On this account it has never been granted the dignity of original work, and has suffered too much in the general judgement of letters. This natural underestimation of its value has had the bad practical effect of lowering the standard demanded, and in some periods has almost destroyed the art altogether. The corresponding misunderstanding of its character has added to its degradation: neither its importance nor its difficulty has been grasped.

Writing men work in part for fame. Nearly all of those with any pretensions to write well—that is, to write as writing should be—take fame for a large part of their incentive; some, perhaps among the greatest, have the attainment of fame for their whole motive. If, therefore, in any department of writing it be impossible to attain fame, that department will presumably be neglected.

That insufficient fame should attach to translation is as inevitable as it is unjust. But though it be inevitable in kind we can modify it in degree and do some justice to the translator, as well as promote the end of great translation, by considering what that achievement of good translation is.

In the first place good translation is exceptionally hard of attainment (and the talent and instruction for arriving at it are correspondingly rare) because it demands what may be called a "dual control". The translator is working in two mediums, which two he has to be keeping abreast during every moment of his work, which both have to be present before him in equal weight and yet —what is a subtle point, but an essential one —present before him in two different ways. He has to be at the same time understanding that which he translates and producing, or as I should say actually creating, the translation in which it is to appear.

He has obviously to know both the tongue into which he translates and the tongue from which he translates, but he has also to possess a sort of shadowy tongue, the wraith of a composite language, a mysterious idiom which combines the two, acts as a bridge, and permits him to pass continuously from one to the other. Further, he must write well in the tongue into which he translates, for a translation is a bit of writing like any other and varies like any other in vernacular excellence. It is not enough that he should fully understand that which he is translating; he must also erect the new form in such a fashion that it shall be good in itself, so that anyone reading it and not knowing it to be a translation should be as satisfied as though he were reading a good original.

Again, when I say that a translator must "know" each of the two languages involved, that word "know" signifies much more than a supposed precise meaning attaching to each term in each tongue; for not only is there no such possible exactitude of definition, but in one tongue the connotation even of a simple

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word simply representing a concrete object will be different from the connotation of the corresponding word in another tongue. Its historical and social connections will be different; its effect upon the rhythm of the sentence and therefore upon the emotion produced will be different—all that!

No wonder that we call translation a difficult art! No wonder that translators even of moderate value are rare, and translators of excellence as rare as poets! And with all that, I repeat, they are forbidden their full reward.

But the social importance of translation has always been great and, as I shall hope to show, is today greater than ever. The moment one society has intercourse by commerce, policy, or arms with a society of another idiom, translation is an imperative activity; you cannot carry on without it. It commands the value of treaties and of commercial contracts and of military capitulations. In a wider field, it is a condition of order between nations and therefore of peace. In a still wider field, it is the condition without which a common culture cannot exist.

And here I would particularly call attention to translation as a function of religion, for in the very nature of the case, translation has been an essential to the maintenance of religion among men, and since the religion of a community, that is, its sanctified customs in morals and action, is the determinant of that community, translation lies at the very roots of society.

For religion has about it two characters which thus compel the presence of translation. In the first place it is, or professes to be, emancipated from time, dealing with immortalities. But living languages are mortal. Therefore this original pronouncement of a religion becomes archaic (it is a part of their strength), and needs rendering into the speech men know in each succeeding age, lest the guide should fall dumb and his lantern be extinguished. In the second place Religion is of its nature universal and its application to various societies demands the rendering of its fundamental doctrines into the idiom of each in such fashion that all the renderings shall make for unity of thought, corresponding with the thought of the original.

Of such historical importance has this special function of translation been that, during the last five centuries at least, the main impetus of all translation has proceeded from it; and nearly all the great translations known to us, from the Septuagint and the Vulgate to the early English and Bohemian Bibles, to the renderings of Calvin's Institute and the innumerable vernacular explanations of Latin forms in the Roman Communion, have issued from this source. It was, we may say, through religious translation, that English prose, in particular, was discovered: and largely by those translations that the modern English character was made.

As with religion, so with the external forms of culture, so with doubt, so with information. The translator is the purveyor of them all.

Now in this point of culture it is that translation acquires its special importance today. For the characteristic of our time is a singular disunion within that which is and must be essentially *one*: which had a common origin and which must have common fate: which used to be called Christendom, and is still called Europe: though the term now implies today extension over seas. This disunion proceeds from the long absence of a common philosophy, that is from the disruption of what was a common religion; and it is expressed in the department of language in a peculiar fashion which all do not appreciate but which is of profound effect upon the life of all.

And this disunion is complex: for the disunion in language between the modern groups of our common civilization is not even coincident with those groups. One social group has one official language, generally known to its citizens as a whole: thus the Italians have Tuscan, the Spaniards Cas-

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tilian. A neighbour has another official tongue; and the two tongues are often so alien one to the other that in passing from one to the other you pass into a different world, as from the world of Trent to the world of Innsbruck. Yet you cannot say of any one such group that its political personality is coincident with its language: County Clare talks English and the Masurians Polish. Because groups of languages are thus not coincident with national feeling, the tendency to create new divisions is enhanced. Were Englishmen, for instance, familiar with good translations of what was once the universal tongue of Irishmen, they would the better know the Irish mind.

Unless translation, then, be proceeding continually and over a very wide range of interests, the unity of our civilization is distorted and its energies become self-destructive; but unless that work of translation is not only widely done but well done, it may actually do more harm than good.

When men were more fully conscious of our cultural unity in the west they clung to the tradition of Latin, which died hard. It is possible that this tradition will be revived, but for the moment it has lost its efficacy and we are like a group of individuals without a common bond of comprehension, with power of speech yet artificially dumb. We need translation today in Europe more than ever we needed it before. We need it materially in the satisfaction of common life, for discovery is common to all our culture and is not of one province. We need it spiritually, in the spreading and comparison of separate cultural efforts more than ever it was needed before, at any rate of recent centuries.

So much for the weight of my subject. So much for presenting the truth that translation is of very grave moment to us today. Now let us examine the nature of translation as a task, the rules which should guide it, the departments into which it falls, and conclude with the perils under which today it lies.

One may divide the task of translation into two departments, corresponding to two ends or functions. The one I would arbitrarily call that of instruction—translation used in order to convey in one tongue facts determined in another tongue; the other I would arbitrarily call literary—the translation into one tongue of spiritual effect determined in another tongue. A segregated example of the first is the translation of a textbook; a segregated example of the second is the translation of a great story or a great poem.

But here it must be remarked that the second is but a particular case of the first. In what I have called the "translation of instruction" we are primarily concerned with exactitude of rendering; we are "literal", our business is so to render the original that in its new form the writer of the original should have no quarrel with it but admit it to be the precise rendering of what he had written. The second, or literary form, demands the same qualities of exactitude and the same conscientious effort at rendering the original, but adds to these something indefinable which corresponds to what we call in pictorial art colour. The first sort of translation corresponds to draughtsmanship, which is no less necessary to a coloured than to an uncoloured picture; the second corresponds to the copying of a painting in which the draughtsmanship must be exactly rendered, but also the sensuous effect, harmony and contrast of hues.

Translation falls, like every literary activity, into the two main forms of prose and verse; nor is discussion of the boundary between these much to the purpose. More important is it to recognize the diversity of origin which differentiates the two. For prose appeals through the reason, verse through the emotions: the one to the Intelligent the other to the Appetitive in Man.

And this is true even in the department of persuasion (whereby men are governed). For when you would persuade by the use

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of the reason, the more strictly prosaic your prose the more thorough your achievement. But when you would persuade by the emotions, which is the commoner and easier way but the less enduring in its results, you must inevitably—though you believe yourself to be writing prose—bring in that admixture of something other which is the property of the poet. And before you know where you are your prose has taken on the colours of rhetoric.

This is true even of narrative, where narrative is intended to work upon the heart rather than the head. All great emotional narrative, however sober in appearance, is essentially rhetorical at heart. I admit this little digression with a useful purpose, which is to show how there must be two attitudes towards translation, corresponding to the two media with which we are dealing; for when we are translating prose, or when we are translating verse and its penumbra of rhetoric, we must use a separate fashion for each.

Because the matter to be translated is thus diverse at its origin, and branches out into further diversities within each group, therefore the rules which we seek to establish for right translation are general and particular: the general rules applying to all translation, the particular to translation of particular kinds.

Of general rules there would seem to be three, two positive and fairly obvious; one negative, not so immediately evident, and therefore more often transgressed.

The two positive rules are:

(1) That the translation should be into the language of the translator.

(2) But that the translated language must be possessed as perfectly as possible by the translator—*short of confusion in his mind.*

The third or negative rule I take to be as follows:

(3) The translator must be emancipated from mechanical restriction, of which the two chief forms are:

(a) The restriction of space.

(b) The restriction of form.

Let me develop these brief sentences.

First, as to translation being at its best in the language of the translator:

The end of translation is the production of a work in a certain language. If I translate *The Song of Roland* into English my object is to produce an English epic—whether in verse or in rhetoric may be later discussed. If a man translate a German statistical summary into French he has the object of producing a French statistical summary. The importance of this rule increases with the subtlety or the spiritual magnitude or the high individuality of the work to be translated. It is better that a German statistical table should be rendered into French by a Frenchman, but it is essential that a Frenchman and not an Englishman or a German should attempt a French rendering of Shakespeare's plays.

There enters into this the admitted truth that what is not wholly conscious in us decides the larger part of our action. We possess our native tongue in an intimate fashion which permits us to use it coincidently with thought. All men who pride themselves upon facility and exactitude in a particular idiom know the peril of thinking in terms of another idiom, lest the purity of their text be modified and its value therefore lessened. The French writer who became famous under the assumed name of Anatole France refused to learn any foreign living tongue (though it was to his advantage that he knew the classics) lest his style in French should suffer: at least, that was the excuse he gave for his ignorance, and it may well have been a true one. Obviously the translator cannot enjoy privileged ignorance of this kind; he must know something of another tongue or he could not translate at all. But it seems equally obvious that unless there is one medium which is native to him and in which he writes well, he cannot translate save into that medium; for only in a man's

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own language can a man write generously and continuously, in a manner worthy of his powers, and make a permanent thing.

The rule that the translated language must be possessed as perfectly as possible may seem so obvious as not to be worth setting down: but I think that if we consider certain of its implications we shall see that it needs to be both stated and considered.

In the first place let us note that this second rule is somewhat less important than the first.

It is true that misconceptions of the original language will mar a translation, and it is even true that in particular cases where the essence of the subject turns perhaps upon a single phrase an error may destroy the value of the whole. But normally the original language is sufficiently possessed by the translator for his task, or he would not have undertaken it; and normally one or two errors in the brute meaning of the original will do no more than put blemishes upon a translation. But if the translator wields his *own* instrument badly, is not a good writer in his *own* language, then the translation *must* be bad throughout, however well the original may be known. One might put it in another way by saying that occasional errors in the meaning of the original will generally have no more than a mechanical effect, while an insufficient use of the language into which the translation is made is of organic importance, affecting the very tissue of a work and affecting it throughout.

The possession of a foreign idiom must extend to much more than the possession of what are called literal meanings; and here let me digress upon an essential point which would alone be matter for more than one lecture such as this. *There are, properly speaking, no such things as identical equivalents;* it is a point we came across at the beginning of these remarks and I would like to deal with it here more thoroughly.

The reason there are no such things as exact equivalents between two terms in two different languages lies in two characters of the Word. First each word, however simply used, is used with multiplicity of meaning. Secondly, the history of a word, its use in the prose and verse of the language to which it belongs, its sound-value in that language, its connection in the mind of the cultured reader of that language with its use in certain masterpieces and remembered phrases, and in general all the atmosphere of its being, make it one thing in one language from what it is in another even where the use being made of it is similar. To take one of the simplest examples: the word "terre" in French, the word "land" in English.

The word "terre" in French may be variously translated by the words Land, Soil, Ground, Earth—to give only four of its distinct meanings. Thus of sailors at sea, making a landfall, *"C'est bien la terre"* means "It is certainly land". *"C'est de la bonne terre"* means "It is good soil". The fine sharp musical phrase, "*Les Rois de la terre*" in the *Marseillaise* means "The Kings of all the earth" and *"Il mit pied à terre"* means "He put foot to ground". In the plural *"ses terres"* used of a magnate means not "his lands" but "his land" or "his estate"—and so on.

The difficulty is a familiar one. The ambiguities produced by it are difficulties against which even the most elementary translator is on his guard. But what must also be remarked and what is equally important when one is attempting the rendering of any great matter—great through its literary form or its message—is the atmosphere of the word. The word *"terre"* in French is a long and powerful syllable, becoming two syllables on occasion. It can be given a mystical value to which the English word "earth" alone corresponds and no other of its supposed equivalents. It is a more profound word in a peasant society than in an urban society. There is more still; it connotes very vaguely but quite certainly in one language one type of landscape, in another another. And there is more, it has been used

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by the poets and the great prose writers in different ways in the two languages, and this historical difference marks its effect whenever it is used.

In the same way certain words are common or even touch upon the ludicrous in one language whose apparent literal equivalent has no such atmosphere about it. There is the classic instance of the word "handkerchief" in *Othello*, which, translated by the French word *"mouchoir"*, interrupted the tragedy with loud laughter. Or again, the simplest word may suggest abuse or anger or repulsion in one tongue and not in another. One may say that the word *"vache"* means "cow", but the very sound of that long vowel *"vache"* has led to its use as a term of odium peculiarly violent and comic only on account of its violence. There is an old and excellent French joke about a Parisian lady who saw a charming little calf and said, *"Que malheur que ça devient vache!"* One cannot translate that by saying "How sad that it should grow into a cow", because cow suggests something absurd but certainly not something fierce and angry; it is not an opprobrious term. Now so much does this word *"vache"* have this other connotation in French that it is the common popular insult to a policeman and is a motive for imprisonment. It is one of the favourite challenges thrown down by young and eager revolutionaries to ordered society.

Next note that there are, in the more modern developments of European languages, and especially in those which have a great mass of colloquial literature, a number of terms for which there is certainly no equivalent at all, even approximate. The English word "cad" has grown up almost within my memory. Men somewhat senior to me could tell me of a time in their own youth when it had nothing of the signification it has now. It is the peculiar product of an aristocratic society, and you can no more translate the word "cad" into French than you can translate the word "gentleman" into French, at least not by a single word. Nor, for that matter, can you translate the word "scholar"; nor can you translate into English the French word *goujat*, or the French word *frondeur*.

I should exceed the limits allowed me if I were to dilate further upon this theme, for it is almost inexhaustible. Everywhere it leads on to the conclusion that the thorough possession of the original language is essential to the translator, and the more perfect his possession of it *with the one reservation I made* the better for his task. Let me give an example of how a single error may vitiate a whole piece of important rendering. As everybody knows, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, one of the greatest as well as one of the most effective books ever written, turns upon the conception of the General Will, and upon the author's rightness or wrongness in characterizing the General Will the value or falsity of his thesis depends. Now early in that great essay occurs the phrase, *"La volonté générale est toujours droite"*. I remember an occasion when during the attempted translation of the work an Englishman was about to publish the phrase under the form, "The general will is always right": a phrase which is not only patently nonsensical and would put Rousseau out of court at once, but is also at issue with what goes before and what comes after. *"La volonté générale est toujours droite"* means, "The general will is always direct"; a very sound remark which has been put in another form by the moderns who say, *"Le peuple est toujours simpliste"*. And there again, what is the English for *"simpliste"*? You need a whole phrase to translate it.

I have said that the possession of the original tongue as perfectly as possible *subject to certain qualification* was obviously an advantage. That qualification it will be remembered was, "short of confusion".

Too great a familiarity with a foreign idiom may render a man confused between that foreign idiom and his own. It may make him at times run the two together in his

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mind, diluting and marring each with the properties of the other. When this happens you get very bad translation indeed; and we all must have noticed that it does happen over and over again nowadays in the writings of those rare scholars who are really steeped in a foreign idiom, or at any rate in its spirit if not its vocabulary. There is a certain degree of familiarity with German which makes an Englishman, especially in the theological field, incomprehensible. There is a certain degree of familiarity with French which makes the English sentence professing to translate a French one unnatural and slightly ridiculous. Such confusion must be avoided in translation even at the price of some less perfect knowledge of the original language, lest being steeped in the foreign tongue one falls in one's own tongue into unusual order, odd neologisms, and metaphorical phrases the force of which are a commonplace to the foreigner but with us a grotesque novelty.

In this connection it may well be asked whether a bilingual person has ever been known to make a good translation. I can recall no case and to this I ascribe what is surely true, and if true, lamentable—that we have no sufficient rendering of the Welsh classics into English. For that there is such a thing as Welsh classical stuff, and that Welsh rhetoric and historical tradition have been so finely put as to move Welshmen profoundly we can all testify. But the trouble is that the Englishman born who knows Welsh well is sadly to seek, and while there have been scholarly men who thought in Welsh but talked in English familiarly, they were not apt for the task precisely because they did not think in English. It is other with the effect of some ancient Irish matter, which has been the better translated because the translator was spiritually in deep sympathy with the Irish tongue but had from childhood been trained to use English.

We may ask ourselves, however, whether an occasional touch of the foreign atmosphere in the translation of a foreign thing be of advantage or no: whether a slight Gallicism here and there in the rendering of a French essay is to the advantage of the English version, and vice versa, an Anglicism in some such work as the admirable modern translation of the works of Kipling into French.

It is perhaps a matter of taste, but for my part I should reply in the negative. I should say that any hint of foreignness in the translated version is a blemish; I should keep to my canon that the translated thing should read like a first-class native thing. And here, by the way, let me give an example which covers all the ground, showing both what a translation should be in its excellence and how little fame a good translation earns for the genius capable of it—I mean that work which I am afraid not one man in a thousand has heard of, the anonymous *Devil on Two Sticks*, the translated *Asmodée* of Lesage.

What fortunes the book has had I know not; possibly the translator (presumably obscure) will be known to those with more scholarship than I. In the two editions which I have, one of them a first edition, no name of a translator appears. It is one of the best books, not only in the language as an English book but as a translation, and it shows what wages one may expect who undertakes this trade. The wages of literature anyhow are pretty bad; they come next, I think, in order of disappointment to the wages of sin: but of all literary wages as paid in fame the very lowest are the wages of the translator; and I suppose that is why translation has today almost been given up in despair.

I gave for my third rule a negative one: translation must be emancipated from mechanical troubles, of which the two chief are:

(a) Space.

(b) The set form of the original.

The attempt to keep the scale of the translation exactly parallel to the scale of the

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original is fatal. Nearly always must a translation be of greater length than the original. Nor is the reason hard to find. Unless you could get a more or less satisfactory equivalent—and we have seen how hard *that* is—you are compelled to expand. In each idiomatic term a whole phrase is packed, and the term must be unpacked if we would put its meaning into our own tongue, where there is no general close-corresponding single term by which to express it.

This is particularly true of translation from almost any other language into English, for English has less inflection than the generality of languages. We have to express continually by relatives and the addition of adverbs ideas which are contained within the very structure of the foreign word. The cases in which there is any direct necessity, or at least serious advantage, in attempting to maintain the scale of the original, are rare. In those cases it may perhaps be inevitable or advantageous to torture the translation somewhat and fit it into its unnatural mould of a precise limit in length, but the translation is always the worse for it.

This negative rule applies with particular strength to verse. What difficulties lie in the translation of verse I shall discuss later, but in connection with the particular point with which we are now dealing it is especially to be remarked that a desperate effort at translating one line by one line or one page by one page will ruin the result. To show what I mean I will delay my example until I come to talk of the translation of verse, and will there quote Mr. G. K. Chesterton's remarkable translation of Du Bellay's famous sonnet, *Heureux qui comme Ulysse.*

As of space, so of set form. You need not translate the sonnet by a sonnet, nor even the chapter by a chapter, still less the paragraph by a paragraph. In each, for the true rendering of the spirit, you need a native form in the place of a foreign one. For example, Victor Hugo suffers very much in English translation by the preservation of the short paragraph which was natural to the French fiction of his time, and has always been unnatural to ours. He becomes grotesque in English where in French he is sublime, not only by the rendering of his short paragraph into a medium unsuited to it, but by the rendering of the very brief epigrammatic sentence or question into an idiom where it is unnatural. The same is particularly true of Michelet, whose glorious rhythms can be and are rendered puerile by insufficient translation. Thus, of the great Girondin's singing, *"Quelle était cette voix?"—"C'était la Révolution même",* I would not translate, "What was that voice?" "It was the Revolution itself." That seems to me, in English, grotesque. I prefer, "One might have said, on hearing such a voice, that one had heard the Revolution itself in song".

In general I should say that, apart from these two mechanical restrictions of space and set form, all mechanical restrictions should be avoided in translation. The translator should be emancipated from them under the same spirit which emancipates the writer in any other form from mechanical restraint. By which I do not mean that having chosen a form you must not maintain that form; having sat down to write a translation as a sonnet you must not run to fifteen lines; having sat down to write an epitaph, you must not produce a little biography. All creative work must be fitted to a frame. But what I mean is that creative work adjusted to a scale not native to itself but borrowed from some other thing is marred, and so is translation marred when the translator erroneously believes it must be perpetually referred to the shape and scale of the original.

So much for the three general rules which, as they appear to me, should govern the business of translation.

In the second part of Mr. Belloc's study, to appear next month, he will take up the two departments of prose and verse and give the particular rules for each.

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DOROTHY CANFIELD: A NEGLECTED BEST SELLER

by Elizabeth Wyckoff

DOROTHY CANFIELD has been a famous novelist for a good many years now. One has to be in one's forties to remember the excitement with which we followed *The Squirrel Cage* as it came out in *Everybody's Magazine* in 1911. And every year or so since that time, something interesting has appeared over her signature. It might be a long and absorbing novel, such as *The Bent Twig* or *Rough Hewn*. It might be a juvenile in *Saint Nicholas*, called *Understood Betsy*, so wise and so humorous that sophisticated mothers and spoiled little girls read it with the same pleased shame; it might be a book about the Montessori method, or short stories about Vermont farm people; there was, of course, a book of war stories. When there was a longer time than usual between books, one always wondered what she was doing, what she was thinking about, and hoped, as one hopes of a non-letter-writing friend, that nothing had happened to her.

That she and her thoughts are so much a part of the mental background of most American women is, I daresay, one good reason why as a novelist and literary personage she has not been taken more seriously. She has phrased theories of life (and created life-like exponents of them) which many people cherish as ideals, and many more think they do. It is difficult to separate the literary craftsman in her work from what there is no better word for than the propagandist—a fluent and creative propagandist, to be sure, but always advancing some immensely interesting, adventurous or courageous way to live. Her own life, as a matter of fact, has been as consistent and as courageous as that of any of her heroines. The same thorough-going reliance upon a sound, feminine combination of head and heart—once head and heart have worked out their decisions—has given her life a continuity of motive that few people achieve.

She was born in Kansas, the daughter of a college professor-president and his brilliantly musical wife. The reflection of her life as a child in small college towns of the West, in faculty society and as an undergraduate is vivid in the early parts of *The Bent Twig*, *The Squirrel Cage,* and *Rough Hewn*. Her father's subject was the Romance languages, a fact which occasioned many family trips to France and Italy and the consequent love of France and the French that no doubt made so obvious and so necessary to her the years she spent with her entire family in France during the war.

An article by Zephine Humphrey, in the *Woman's Journal*, gives a detailed account of her amazingly active life. After her college degree, she did graduate work at Columbia; at some very early age she had earned her doctor's degree in the Romance languages and had written several scholarly books, one a study of Racine and Corneille, another a text-book with Professor George

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Carpenter. An academic career seemed indicated, and a brilliant one. But she had had enough of it. In 1907, shortly after she had inherited a farm in Arlington, Vermont, she married John Fisher, a Columbia friend, and, with what is most easily described by the Emersonian cliché of "plain living and high thinking" as a guide, retired with him to that remote spot to live. Their apparent distaste for the capitalist system, their insistence on the dignity of work, the beauty of primitive human relationships, the desirability of a simple life and only a small *quid pro quo* as a fair reward of effort, all come out at later dates in her books. The theories are lived always by heroines who, no matter how they may be described in the flesh, live and breathe Dorothy Canfield's own philosophies. Here in Arlington a daughter, Sally, was born, and *The Squirrel Cage* (1912) written. In 1914 a son, Jimmy, was born, and in 1915 two books, *Hillsboro People*, short stories of Vermont life, and *The Bent Twig* were published.

In the spring of 1916 her husband went to France as an ambulance driver, and in the autumn Mrs. Fisher, with the two babies, followed him. Her first war work was with the blind; later, after her husband was made head of a training camp for ambulance drivers, she was for some time *Brigadier de l'Ordinaire*, in other words camp housekeeper. A Red Cross home for refugee children at Guéthary also took much of Mrs. Fisher's time, and, I suspect, a large part of the royalties from *Home Fires in France* and *The Day of Glory*. Sally caught typhoid in France, but recovered; fortunately no irreparable catastrophe marred the Fishers' elaborate pilgrimage.

In 1919 they all returned to Vermont, where Mrs. Fisher has carried on ever since what she calls a normal woman's life. This involves a simple and happy family life, housekeeping, with one maid, in the original farmhouse, much work for the Vermont Children's Aid Society, the State Education Board, the Parent-Teachers Association, and much lecturing as well as the writing of several novels. A large brick house in Arlington which recently descended to her was given to the town as a Community House, with a wing reserved for her own guests. Mr. Fisher's service in the state legislature is in line with the public spirit of both. This past year a short book, called *Why Stop Learning?*, of the type which, as Arnold Bennett used to do, Mrs. Fisher throws off between novels, has become the voice and watchword of the national adult education movement. Mrs. Fisher writes in a cabin on a hillside, and her friends tell of seeing her working absorbedly in odds and ends of time that most writers cannot manage to use.

Now the children are growing up, and Mrs. Fisher has been a best seller for years. Her early public is in its forties and fifties and can look at her, if they will, with a detached and middle-aged judgement. With *The Deepening Stream*, her latest novel, fresh in our minds, it is not a bad time to look at her work and her place in contemporary letters. Disregarding the friendly affection of her really great public, where would a dispassionate critic place her in any scale of present-day novelists?

A review of her career and a re-reading of the earlier novels is a rather surprising experience. The only novel that really "dates" is *The Squirrel Cage*. That book, re-read in 1931, seems undeniably brilliant and competent, but also undeniably adolescent. It is like hearing one's own girlish agonies over again to read the heroine's speeches. The plot —how vital it seemed then and how trivial now—hangs on the struggle of an idealistic middle-class young woman to get away from the material things of a small-town society. She was not, you remember, quite strong enough a character to defy her circle successfully; she married the tiresome young business man and not the dimly Christlike and socialistic young hermit whom her family deplored. She was thoroughly miserable

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and even ill. An accident removes the husband—Mrs. Fisher has never had to finish a novel and a villain in this fortuitous manner since then—and at the end of the book one is sure that happiness and a crust are to be the portion of heroine, hero and the child of the first husband. *The Squirrel Cage* was a feminine form (and incidentally a better made book than most of them) of the novels of the type of those by Winston Churchill, Owen Wister and Henry Sydnor Harrison. A woman served as the "hero", romance and idealism were embodied in a shadowy male character, and every girl and woman who read the book identified herself with the sensitive, frustrated and, of course, neurotic heroine. Incidentally, even at this early date and with no blowing of horns, there is much sound modern psychology behind the story. (Perhaps, however, there is only the shrewd innate knowledge of people of the genuine novelist; as a clever scholar, mixing his dates a little, might five hundred years from now demonstrate a great deal of Freud or Jung from the novels of George Eliot.)

The Bent Twig, three years later, was a great advance over *The Squirrel Cage.* The theme was the exact converse of that of the first book. The heroine in this case was brought up to plain living and high thinking, and tried to get away from both, but in the end the twig bends as it was inclined and she marries a socialist millionaire who, renouncing his fortune to establish a foundation for the benefit of his employees, retires to a small property in Vermont, where they are to lead a quiet but productive and happy life. *The Bent Twig* is an extraordinarily good novel, head and shoulders above most novels of its time. There are some first-class characters, notably the heroine's professor father, her placid but far from stupid mother, her inarticulate extravert sister. Sylvia herself is at first rather an unsympathetic character as she leads her egotistic young years of shame because her father and mother not only have shabby friends who drink beer and play the 'cello, but give parties with charades and sandwiches and do not keep up with the faculty society of the western university town where they live. But as she grows older and develops not only in character but in the ability to think clearly, she comes to a full-grown mental and emotional stature that was and is, even on re-reading after fifteen years, a stirring thing to read. The best emotional scenes in the book are described with a sureness and accuracy of detail that Mrs. Fisher apparently had no time for in *The Squirrel Cage.*

The Brimming Cup and *Rough Hewn* are a pair of novels about the same people. They are quite as good as *The Bent Twig* and the heroine is from the start a much nicer person. The hero, too, is Mrs. Fisher's first really successfully delineated hero. The story of Marise and Neale of course has more continuity and scope, as it goes on through years of married life, here again the married life of a pair who are building a beautiful life in an unworldly way in a small Vermont community. Marise weathers the temptation to return with a *tertium quid* to the cosmopolitan life which she had renounced for love and theory, and emerges after one of the most searching and beautiful passages in any of Mrs. Fisher's novels into a completely satisfactory state of mind and heart about her husband. Both books are rather too long, rather lacking in humour. These are captious criticisms, however, for books written and published during and just after the war.

Between these two novels and *The Deepening Stream,* in which for the first time Mrs. Fisher has used the war as a factor in a novel, were *The Home Maker* and *Her Son's Wife*—both books concerned with superficially simple but really difficult and intricate situations. *The Home Maker,* again competent and vivid, and rather ahead of its time, is the story of a family in which the traditional functions of the parents are completely reversed and not shared in varying

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proportions, as is more usual; the father looks after the house and children and the mother earns the income. *Her Son's Wife* contains a remarkable piece of character-creation and development—the middle-aged widowed school teacher, sure of herself, efficient, a little bossy and grim, but happy, whose only son brings home as his bride a girl the exact opposite of everything that Mrs. Bascom has always liked and approved. If an English novelist had written this book or a new American writer who was not already the idol of the 2,600,000 purchasers (and three to five times as many readers) of a woman's magazine, as well as a steady best seller, the critics would have fastened many more laurels upon Mrs. Fisher's brow, I am sure. As it was, she had the usual excellent reviews but caused no excitement. For the first time the heroine is not the author herself, or her ideal. She is a genuine creation, moving in a real plot to a genuine dénouement of the spirit.

Last of all we have her *The Deepening Stream*, written long enough after the war for the author not to be carried away by the emotions of the time. At first one sees merely a familiar pattern; here is again the sensitive, gifted girl, this time unhappy over sex because of the remembered bickerings of her parents, who is delivered from an inhibited life by falling in love with a gentle, rather average, inarticulate young man. There is a pleasant picture of village life in the Hudson River valley, and Quaker family local colour; then the scene changes when Matey and Adrian pick up the children and go to the war, just as the Fishers actually did. The picture of Paris in wartime, the French family of old friends with whom Matey lives and works, is unforgettable. Here Dorothy Canfield shows a power of concrete description, of character suggestion, of dramatic and emotional control of her material that is so fluent and so sure that one never pauses to say "What excellent writing this is!" but only reads on in order to understand the people and find out what happened—whether Ziza's husband ever was found, whether the children in the cellar of the Lycée would escape the air raid, what Matey and Adrian were ever able to work out as a way of life after such thorough experience of so horrible a war. There is at the end, no matter how Matey may try to look ahead in the lives of her children, and in working with her husband in his little village bank, that weariness and questioning that only the generation of men and women who are old enough to have taken little children through the war years can quite understand. If the book had been ended with an adequate answer to Matey's situation in 1920 it would be much less true a book.

It is very probable that Dorothy Canfield is not at all troubled by lack of literary recognition. She undoubtedly takes greater pleasure in the response of her audience than she could get from any criticism however laudatory. And, of course, if she had wanted to lead the literary life, she could have stayed in New York and lived it. But her own detachment is no reason for ignoring or taking her for granted. Indeed, to leave her out of serious discussion of the American novel is becoming more than a little ridiculous.

As a matter of fact Dorothy Canfield belongs in the succession of novelists that begins with George Eliot and continues with Mrs. Humphrey Ward and Mrs. Deland—all of them warm-hearted women (yes, even Mrs. Ward; did she not create Marcella?), all of them full of a motherly understanding and tolerance of human beings, all of them a little omniscient, like most women, and all of them except George Eliot with her minor characters, too interested in life and people to be humorous or even witty in their books. Only a deep female humour could underlie many of their conceptions of character, but there is no surface wit. They never laugh at their characters. If you smile now and then yourself, it is a motherly smile.

Where the next generation may put Dor-

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othy Canfield I do not prophesy. One does not think of her in the same breath with G. B. Stern, Virginia Woolf, or any of the young followers of Proust or Hemingway. In spite of an academic tendency to class her with Sinclair Lewis as a merely journalistic novelist, there is an emotional force in both writers—rather greater in Dorothy Canfield's books, I think, except perhaps for *Arrowsmith*—that it seems to be fashionable deliberately to ignore. In the matter of form, Miss Cather, needless to say, excels Dorothy Canfield. But the big canvas and the perfect etching may both be genuinely enough works of art. On the other hand, Dorothy Canfield never slips into the near-hysteria which keeps both Edna Ferber and Fannie Hurst from finishing their novels as well as they begin.

There is an unself-consciousness and a lavishness about the outpouring of the old-fashioned born novelist of Dorothy Canfield's sort that is unmistakable. No considerations of form or current literary enthusiasms affect a writer of this type who has in early life fashioned a good working style, flexible and ready to hand, who has some people to write about, a story to tell and—they cannot help it—a theory or a thesis to uphold. Wells, Sinclair Lewis, George Eliot, Dickens—the fluent, deeply emotional novelists are a type by themselves and Dorothy Canfield belongs with them. Because she has been popular from the beginning of her career, because her shrewd common sense and understanding of the conditions of everyday life, even more than her emotional power, make her the "favourite author" of enormous numbers of unanalytical women who find in every story some illumination for their own lives, she has never had the recognition which her work deserves. She is journalistic to the extent that she produces constantly. She is unliterary partly because she is completely unself-conscious. If she achieves a beautiful passage it is because the words and sentences express what she has to say, and not because she is interested in beautiful writing except as a tool.

The younger generation may find Mrs. Fisher's taste too refined. Surprisingly enough, even with reservations, someone put *The Deepening Stream* in a list of "pleasant" novels in the *Atlantic Monthly* the other day. And yet one can understand the choice. She can write about almost any horror without being offensive. No doubt the younger generation, too, cannot understand how her thorough-going feminism, which she always takes for granted, can be combined with her simple and emotionally primitive conception of the obligations of marriage and motherhood. The women who live this life cannot ordinarily write about it, and when they are old enough to understand it they are not usually writing book reviews or paying much attention to them. I expect that most of the men who write criticism of fiction think of Mrs. Fisher as a popular woman's magazine novelist, and little more. They should read the last half of *The Deepening Stream*.

Quarreling with prize awards has come to be the favourite American indoor sport—and it is an invidious and odious business, particularly when an award has been given to an honest and witty, interesting and workmanlike novel, written by a woman with a delightfully observing eye and a discriminating mind. Yet when there was no Willa Cather novel last year Dorothy Canfield should have had the credit for being one of the few American novelists of either sex who have, with a competent and restrained technique, that inexhaustible, unwearying and tolerant understanding of human nature which is the distinguishing mark of first-rate novelists and of first-rate novelists alone.

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A NEW LITERARY MOVEMENT IN FRANCE

by Frank C. Hanighen

WHOEVER has floundered half-way through that hundred page description of an aristocratic tea-party in Proust's *Guermantes Way*, has doubtless felt like rushing out and having a good wholesome talk with a street-cleaner. It is some such reflex as this which the Populists have experienced. Literary schools beget literary schools and the new school, Populism, which as the name indicates is concerned with the People, is in revolt against the Proustians, their duchesses and bourgeoisie. More than a half-century ago its grandsire Naturalism rebelled against the predominant cult represented by the boudoir romances of Octave Feuillet and the resultant victory made its leaders world-famous. Will the new movement find the present conservatives as vulnerable and will it produce its Zolas and Maupassants?

The Populists protest against more than the "snobism" of Proust and his followers. They are at war with the intense preoccupation with psychology, the desertion of observed reality for the transcriptions of nebulous thought-processes, that mania for Memory and "things past". Such a healthy reaction is perhaps due, for the literature of the past ten years has been filled with novels bearing these characteristics. Their authors are not slavish imitators of Proust, but they all bear his influence. There is Louis Martin-Chauffier. He too is interested primarily in the mental activity of his characters, and his bourgeois men of leisure are just as complex as his master's barons. But their creator is more concerned with their present than with their past and the memory of the past. Great blobs of past experience do not suddenly intervene in their reflections and upset their none too stable minds. The endeavour here seems to be to analyze the chemistry of thoughts, sensations and emotions which stream through them. Jacques de Lacretelle is another who is "Proustian", but with a difference. He, like Martin-Chauffier, is more concerned with the present, but he is more orderly and more logical. He builds up his psychological facts in a deliberate fashion so that events seem predictable from the psychology. Roger Martin du Gard should be mentioned with these men, for in his *The Thibaults* he has portrayed, although more objectively, the interior torments of a generation.

The Catholics, Julian Green and François Mauriac, for all their allegiance to an older tradition, manifest the same solicitude for the doubtings, the contradictions, the complexities of psychology. And then there is Duhamel, who from an interest in the sufferings of the war-wounded in *Civilization* has turned to the mental sufferings of civilians. He complains, "the world has two stories: the story of its acts, which they carve in bronze, and the story of its thoughts, which no one seems to care about". In one of his novels a petty clerk, Salavin, is the prey of

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so many complexes that he yields to an absurd impulse to touch his employer's ear. This extraordinary act sets going a most curious psychological tale.

I note in none of these writers such properties as the famous "cup of tea" or the "three trees" which precipitated Proust into such magnificent meditations, but their scenes are diaphanous enough to arouse the literal Populists. The word "inquietude" recurs frequently and seems to suggest a type of instable, disaffected, unhappy human. The titles of their books bear testimony to this; *l'Incertain, l'Indifférent, A la Dérive (Adrift), la Vie inquiète de Jean Hermelin.* A spiritual unrest, a seeking for some formula, some escape from their psychic troubles —such seems to be the net expression of these books. Quite precious, and a bit adolescent in their pessimism at times, they perhaps justify Henri Barbusse's comment on them—"the colic of the decadence". But fundamentally it was the disillusioned post-war generation looking for some firm support, some rock to cling to in a world which was flowing past in confusion. This explains the unpopularity of Anatole France, the insufficiency of his weary cynicism; this explains why Gide with his emancipated exhortations has claimed some, why mysticism has drawn others.

Incidentally, many of these writers have been translated in this country, but they have been presented in a rather haphazard way and at times for reasons extraneous to their real virtues. Thus Lacretelle has been represented by *Silbermann*, one suspects, for its bearing on Jewish problems and *Marie Bonifas* possibly for its kinship to *The Well of Loneliness.* Perhaps Julian Green's American associations and the violent nature of his plots have assured his reception, and it is more than likely that because Thérèse Desqueyroux almost murdered her husband Mauriac has found an audience here. However, one should thank the publishers for the quite gratuitous presentation of *The Count's Ball*, a subtle little book with no especial American appeal, by Raymond Radiguet, a young writer who should be classed with this movement. In France women writers are classified arbitrarily under "Feminine Literature", regardless of their aesthetic affinities. Without following this practice we can hardly place the truly great writer Madame Colette within the narrow category of the Proustians. However, apropos of the hit-and-miss manner of choosing French novels for translation, one must complain that while her reputation has been built up in this country by such risqué trifles as *Mitsou*, obviously issued to gather the American blushes, one of her best works *La Vagabonde* did not appear until this Spring.

The Populists are right. All these writers save Duhamel, who has feet in both territories, deal with folk who can afford to buy orchestra seats for the Folies-Bergère even though they may not be the sort who care to do so. Some of these "inquiet" novelists were obviously influenced by André Gide in his preoccupation with the homosexual. In America even George F. Babbitt, however standardized he seems or is made to seem, is endowed with a definite integral personality. But Proustian France harks to this dictum when it creates characters: "At any moment, when we consider it, the whole soul possesses only a fictitious value". This doctrine from Proust's famous passage on "The Intermittences of the Heart" has influenced the young writers so strongly that they seem unable to produce any but the most negative and flaccid sort of protagonists.

Every school produces its absurd examples as a result of its doctrines. Naturalism certainly had no dearth of curiosities as a result of doctrinaire Zola-worship. One recalls the hero of Huysmans's novel *En Ménage*, a naturalistic novelist who returns home early one night so that he might arise at dawn to see the effect of sunrise on an abattoir and finds his wife in a compromising position with a strange man. Perhaps Emmanuel

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Bove's timid little hero who is literally and actually afraid to pronounce his own name is the best example *in extremis* of the "inquietude" movement.

But the doctrine that the body is only a "vase" to hold an absolutely fluid personality was bound to induce a reaction. Jean Prévost, not to be confused with Marcel Prévost the author of *The Demi-Virgins*, seemed able to master his "inquietude", rebelled against the prevailing spirit and pilloried these tendencies in an "essay on introspection". He charged that these thinkers "concealed themselves behind *closed eyes*" and that introspection leads to "the degradation of judgement, the progressive forgetfulness of Experience, which leads to dreams". And the dream "is a mark of disintegration, disorganization". He summoned youth to contemplate the "exterior Universe", to look "outside themselves".

Prévost found the most effective specific for mental unrest in the exercise of the body. He found that the triumphant, mastering gestures of sport induce the Spirit to join and triumph too. He would thus seem to harken to our Y.M.C.A. with their slogan of "Keep Fit for the Battle of Life". Prévost's *Les Plaisirs et les sports* is but one of an impressive *sportif* literature which has arisen in France. The books are not, as the word *sportif* would suggest to the American reader, in any way similar to the schoolboy romances of Ralph Henry Barbour or the gorgeous vernacular comedies of Ring Lardner. The only novel at all characteristic of these *sportif* books which has appeared in America is Henry de Montherlant's *The Bull-fighters*. That particular novel of Montherlant's is more exotic than *sportif*, but he has written *Paradis a l'Ombre des épées* and *L'Onze devant la porte dorée*. These books are less novels than collections of sketches containing reflections on the influence of sport on French life. One is amused to find that French mothers are much like American ones in their opposition to their offspring's desire to play football. Montherlant reproaches these mothers with raising their boys too carefully, protecting them from the virile training of athletics. The author's chief message is a reconcilation of the Greek cult of the body and Christian morality. Perhaps the best *sportif* novel is Dominique Braga's *"5,000"*, which describes a 5,000 metre race. The thoughts, fears and hopes which stream through the French hero-athlete's mind during the race make up the subject-matter of the story. It is a fascinating and veracious account of an athlete's mind during a contest, and it ends, in a quite Continental and un-American manner, with the defeat and collapse of the hero.

Prévost and the *sportif* writers prepared the way for the Populists, but it was not until Emmanuel Berl's *Mort de la Pensée bourgeoise* appeared that the reaction became a real counter-attack. His book, or rather pamphlet, for he proclaims himself a polemical pamphleteer, was a vitriolic *J'Accuse* directed specifically against the reigning literary generation. With the fervour of an H. L. Mencken, he arraigned Mauriac, Maurois (who had written the Proustian novel *Atmosphere of Love*), Lacretelle and Green for timidity of thought, sterile ideas, and a circumscribed fictional world. He sneered at their *de luxe* editions and attacked their "snobism". He complains of the decadence of their protagonists and, with some rather curious aesthetics, asks which of these heroes one would really choose to have as a friend. Berl avows himself a believer in revolution for revolution's sake. He admits that they achieve little progress, simply substituting another tyranny in place of the old, but he praises the tonic action of revolt. It is no surprise, then, that the hero on whom he would bestow his friendship is not Swann but Garine, the revolutionist in André Malraux's *The Conquerors*.

It is undoubtedly true that Malraux has created a vigorously original character in this Nihilist who exploits Bolshevism merely for

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the expression of his monstrous ego. To many American critics this book was simply a picturesque account of the confused Chinese troubles of the last few years, a sort of *Roar China* in novel form. But Aldous Huxley saw it truly as a portent of the reaction which mechanistic civilization may ultimately provoke, the portent of a Nihilism which smashes simply for the sake of smashing. Garine has taken his place as a twentieth-century Julien Sorel.

His creator André Malraux is somewhat Stendhalian too. He was arrested by the French colonial officials in Indo-China charged with the theft of some Cambodian idols which he was transporting to Paris to sell to American collectors. The facts were admitted, but he was finally freed after numerous appeals and much litigation, and betook himself to Canton where he became active in the Communist movement. A Nihilist himself, one would be tempted to say, were it not known that he has since taken occasion to protest the innocence of his motives in carrying off the Cambodian idols. It seems that even a Nihilist in good standing finds it difficult to shake off his bourgeois ways. This applies to M. Berl himself, for if we look on the reverse of the title page of his book we note that formidable inscription which every delicate Proustian novel seems to possess, begining, "15 copies on Annam de Rives paper, numbered one to ten, and I to V, 2000 copies on . . . etc".

The predominant note of the Berl pamphlet is its violence, and one feels that it is the arbitrary revolt of a man who finds his literary environment stifling. Mindful of Gide's Lafcadio, in *The Vatican Swindle*, who hurled a man out of a railway carriage just to test the possibilities of his ego, we may dub M. Berl's outcry an *acte gratuit*. Mauriac *et al* are thrown out, but for what? M. Berl does not indicate. But one may interpret his invectives to mean that a literature more virile and objective is needed to replace the current invertebrate productions.

One of Berl's criticisms concerned the remoteness of contemporary literature from the modern scene. He wonders how a reader of the twenty-first century will be able to picture the life of the 1920's from its novels. And one wonders, too, how many readers nowadays are throwing themselves with cries of joy on the tremendous documentation of Zola in order to study the 1870's. Berl seems concerned that the fall of the franc and the factory conditions have won such little notice. He points out that Maurice Barrès walking in his beloved Lorraine saw "the enchanted hill" but did not see the steelworks which are also characteristic of that district. Moreover he sneers at the prevailing vogue of Dostoievski, with his "exceptional cases", and he deplores the neglect of Tolstoy.

And throughout the pamphlet there were numerous expressions of admiration for Zola. There always seems to be some Zola anniversary or celebration, and so the anniversary of the publication of *Les Soirées de Médan*, which included Zola's *Attack on the Mill* and launched Guy de Maupassant on his realistic career, gave M. Berl his opportunity. He delivered an address which was a virtual call to writers to break with the tenebrous researches of the psychologists and to study the life of the people in direct realistic style. "I believe in Zola," he said, "in his influence in the future as in the past."

If Berl was the Antony, so were André Thérive and Léon Lemonnier the Brutus and Cassius. But it was hardly a conspiracy, for the school was announced and upheld in all the innocent aura of *Le Temps*. Thérive became literary critic of *Le Temps* after the death of Paul Souday. The conservative readers of that organ who had been summoned by M. Souday to disport themselves in the elegant society of Guermantes and to admire André Gide, now found themselves urged to inspect the private lives of garage mechanics and factory workers.

"To contemplate the exterior universe, to look outside oneself." Jean Prévost had lived

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up to these words of his and had progressed from the eulogy of his own body to the admiration of mechanics' biceps. M. Thérive exulted when Prévost's *Les Frères Bouquinquant* appeared last year and proclaimed *urbi et orbi* that this tale of two brothers, semi-skilled workers in Paris, was a masterpiece. Leon Bouquinquant operates a loading crane on the banks of the Seine and after unsuccessful attempts to seduce the servant girl Julie leads her to the Mayor's office and solemnizes their relations. But the union was blessed by only cuffs, blows and drunken fits, the relaxations of a crane-operator apparently. His brother Pierre, a mechanic who boasts that he is a Communist, feels pity then love for his sister-in-law and she gives birth to a child of which he is the father. In a brawl Pierre pushes Leon into the Seine to drown and the shrewd Julie insists on assuming the guilt, arguing that no jury would convict her for murder in self-defense. Her surmise proves correct and she returns to her baby and Pierre.

Prévost has evidently taken just an ordinary criminal newspaper item and from it woven a clear, compact little novel. The progressive conventionalizing of the wild Communist through love and paternity is amusingly told. But one feels that M. Prévost descended from his annotations of Montaigne and, a grand duke of culture, investigated his proletariat. Literary slumming, however skilfully done, will out, and this Populist "masterpiece" is no exception.

The founding of a school must be difficult work, and when the pontiffs are somewhat exuberant they often claim writers who exhibit tendencies not too closely allied to that school. So it is that the Populists have claimed André Chamson, whose *The Road* got so much attention here some years ago. It is true Chamson does deal with the people, but the Road in the novel seems to occupy a place by itself, to be itself a participant in the drama. And this is not Populism but our old friend Unanism, the almost forgotten school which Jules Romains sponsored. The reader may remember his *Death of a Nobody*, in which the death of a workman in a squalid lodging-house affects in varying degrees his neighbours, relatives and fellow workers. In Romains's work it is the collective life which is the hero, and Chamson I think owes much more to Unanism than Populism.

Another writer vaunted by Thérive is Marcel Aymé. He took one of the many literary prizes which French writers seek by his *Table aux Crèves*. It is a well written little novel which contains the conciliatory village curé, the Voltairian mayor, the peasants scheming for more land—a Balzacian scene and a sober, uninspired narrative. Aymé is no bourgeois snooper; he seems to be of the people himself and the virtue of his work resides in his apparent veracity and acquaintance with his characters. Nor does he treat only of the peasants, like Chamson, who is perhaps more of a regionalist than anything else, always describing his native Cévennes. Aymé in his latest novel *La Rue sans nom* studies a sordid street in a factory town. Therein he introduces a picture of Italian immigrants who form such a problem of unassimilated workers in the France of today, a problem not unlike those which have perplexed Americanization workers. One is interested too in noting that the Mediterranean folk are represented by Aymé much as they appear in American fiction and drama, and some of the characters recall the flamboyant Italian in *Street Scene*.

But while the workers French and Italian, their women, the café proprietor, the police are the actors, yet on a plane above all these the Street itself has a collective personality and its own drama is parallel to that of its denizens. And here we encounter the King Charles head of Unanism which is always bobbing up. What a babel of diverging ideologies!

It would seem that the critical apologists of Populism should trace more definitely the outlines of their theories. This they have done

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indeed with reference to Naturalism, which is obviously the progenitor of the school. M. Lemonnier, who plays Remus to M. Thérive's Romulus, says apropos of this, "there is a naturalistic tendency which we reject. Pessimism without grandeur is démodé. That shabby and ill-natured antipathy which the Naturalists felt for their characters shocks us as much as their unwholesome need for minimizing, contracting and soiling everything."

This is true enough. The Populists display none of that nauseating mania for the materially disgusting in modern life. Alexis, that faithful batman of Zola, spent so much time documenting the degrading aspects of brothels for his master and for his own pitiful productions that he became good for little else but debauchery. The Populists seem little concerned with these strata and if they do describe them they invest them with some human dignity. Nor do they lavish their descriptive talent on *châlets de nécessité* as did Huysmans, who gained such fame in this direction that he was urged to write *The Odors of Paris.*

Lemonnier defends the school against the reproach of materialism. He protests that mysticism is in the hearts of humble folk. "We set ourselves apart from the Naturalists because mysticism has much more importance than most of them think." M. Lemonnier himself, to show how elastic are his rules, has written a Populist novel dealing with life in the seventeenth century. It describes in a realistic manner the superstitions of Norman peasants of that day; it treats of witchcraft and sabbats and is a fairly successful experiment in historical realism.

But the mystic spirit so extolled by Lemonnier is best found in the works of Jean Giono, who is probably the most talented of the Populists. *Hill of Destiny,* which found so much favour in this country, won the Prix Brentano and is a beautiful evocation of the spirit of the peasantry. The primitive mysticism of the book distinguishes it from the run of peasant novels. The locale is named but there is no allegiance to a narrow regionalism. The time is set in the present day; this we know by an almanac in use. But the hill and its inhabitants have a spirit of the ancients of early classical times; their spirit antedates the transalpine Gauls as Gaea antedated Cybele. The peasants use a Roman sarcophagus as a tool chest, and there are Roman remains on the Hill. And the "Panic" which spreads throughout the community before the forest fire stems from the goat-footed deity himself.

The Church plays no direct rôle in the story. There is a reference to holy water, but the water is used in a purely superstitious way, as Mexican peasants use it, as an incantation. The love episode of the girl and the lunatic is like the earthy rout of the satyrs and nymphs. This spirit of Pan is continued in Giono's second novel *Un de Baumugnes.* In this we have the call of the wild again and the principal actor seems to be the syrinx itself. The hero of the book discovers his old sweetheart unhappily married and he woos her with his Pan pipe so that she leaves her husband with him and goes back to the Hill of Destiny.

It is not surprising that Giono avows his debt to the classics, the Iliad, the Odyssey and the great tragedies. He asserts that he has encountered modern prototypes of Ulysses on the Hill of Destiny and he stresses his intimate kinship with the peasants. He reads his novels in manuscript to the pupils and teacher of a country schoolhouse and from their comments obtains not only the spirit of rural life but also the language of the people. Among modern writers he acknowledges the influence of Padraic Colum, Walt Whitman and Thoreau.

It is a question how far Giono and other meritorious Populist writers have drawn inspiration and nourishment from the school as such. They might have written their own indigenous novels without all that pontificating. Besides, the advice to write about only

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certain classes of society is unsound. Great literature includes all types, both Hamlets and Bottoms; Dostoievski the true democrat wrote of both princes and beggars. Even Proust himself was capable of representing his servants and gardeners as well as his wealthy dilettantes. These great men did not circumscribe their activities. It seems just as reprehensible for bourgeois writers like Jean Prévost to stoop to proletarian life as it is for bourgeois writers to paint aristocratic life. Literature will always jump the lines of demarcation set down by dogmatists.

Moreover after a survey of Populist literature most of the reproaches flung at the Proustians can be seen to have come back to roost. Murder and adultery in *Les Frères Bouquinquants*, are they not "exceptional cases"? And does not Giono's rutilant peasant exemplify eroticism? As to the homosexual taint, it is present in Dabit's Populist novel *Hôtel du Nord*. M. Dabit, by the way, is a proletarian who acknowledges his debt to Huysmans, not the Huysmans of *En Route* and Catholic mystical works, but the Naturalist follower of Zola who wrote that crapulous novel, *Les Sœurs Vatard*. Perhaps M. Thérive, mindful of these facts, realized the limitations of dogma when he recently announced that the Populist movement simply "desires to remind novelists that they should enrich their work continually by the comprehension and representation of the real." Certainly a broader and more catholic statement of aims.

But the movement goes on. *Les Frères Bouquinquant* failed to obtain the coveted Goncourt prize for 1931, losing to Fauconnier's *Malaisie*, a book of travel rather than a novel, in the exotic tradition of Loti with a flavour of Malraux. Thus rebuffed by the Academy which above all is concerned with works of realism, they have announced a "Populist Prize," to swell the already too-numerous list of official laurels in the Parisian literary field. This is a bit reminiscent of that wealthy Frenchman who established a prize and then had it bestowed on himself for his own mediocre work. Among the list of contenders I note one, *L'Usine (The Factory)* by J. Pallu, a title devout enough for the most pious Populist.

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THE IMMIGRANT'S TREASURE HUNT

by G. A. Miloradovitch

THE IMMIGRANT came to the U. S. A. as to a refuge, seven years ago. He knew nothing of life but home, school, first love, war, wounds, death and exile, and so, of course, he thought that was all there is to it and wondered if it was worth while going on with.

At first he had to fight for bare existence in what was to him an alien land, among men whose training and traditions were utterly unlike his own, and whose language, he found to his surprise, he did not understand. Over there, even when a hunted fugitive, he had been of some importance; here, he was neither more nor less than an immigrant in search of a job.

Slowly he tasted the zest of this new life, and discovered that to provide for your own immediate wants is the greatest game in the world. When food and shelter seemed fairly certain for more than a day at a time, when overalls and store-clothes fitted him as easily as a smart uniform used to, and he could fasten his necktie properly without a single swear-word, he began to think about books again.

At home and at school he had dipped into the world classics, ancient and modern. He was taught Latin but not Greek, for his eleven years of schooling began after the Educational Reform of 1902. But in the library at home were chastely gorgeous editions of Homer, Sophocles, Aristotle, Epictetus and other great ones, and on each page of each book the original Greek faced the Russian literal translation. The future immigrant used to compare them, line by line, and sometimes read the Greek aloud to see what it sounded like. He could do this, for the characters are like those of his own language, only smaller and crabbed-looking.

In that home-library he read Voltaire and Rousseau in the original. Voltaire's dry sarcasm and cutting irony made him chuckle, but *Le Contrat social* of Rousseau gave him a sensation of stern, proud uplifting and made him think of the author as stern and proud, too, utterly unlike the nasty little man he revealed himself to be in his *Confessions*.

On a shelf below the Ancients was Shakespeare, in separate volumes of Russian and English. In translation the Bard was howlingly funny and reminded the boy of the queer folk-dramas that were acted at the village fair. In the original the immortal Shakespeare seemed to him just tiresome and pompous. He ingenuously told his English tutor so and personally offended that gentleman without meaning to do so in the least.

In his own Pantheon the poet Pushkin was chief god, with Lermontoff set up far behind. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* was his favourite story. He read and re-read it till he knew and liked or disliked all the characters in it as if they were alive. He just skimmed through *Anna Karenina*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* nauseated him. Later on he read Andreyev, Chekhov and Gorki.

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Extracts from Corneille and Racine were inflicted upon him by his French tutor; he admired Victor Hugo though without enthusiasm, went crazy over Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, read Dumas and Alphonse Daudet, but knew nothing whatever about American literature.

If ever he thought of America at all it was as a place discovered by Columbus in 1492, and now peopled chiefly by the descendants of the pioneers and adventurers who had exterminated the Indians. He also knew that it had produced George Washington, who was its First President, and Lincoln, who abolished slavery and was assassinated. In fact, he knew little more of the United States than the American high school boy or West Pointer knows of Russia.

It is true that once, in the Art Shop on his own Main Street, he bought a copy of *Leaves of Grass* because of the beautiful binding and queer title. He rode home with it sticking out of his tunic pocket and it fell to the ground just before he reached the house. One of the dogs—a very young one—was trying his teeth on it before the boy was out of the saddle. The two puppies—human and canine—rolled over each other, both clutching at Walt Whitman, while the horse sensibly trotted off to the stables. There wasn't much left of *Leaves of Grass* when the boy succeeded in getting it away from the dog.

At the Cadet School, in the English class, the future immigrant recited *The Psalm of Life* but thought that Longfellow was a compatriot of "that other siropy chap", Tennyson. The whole class giggled over the latter's *Sir Galahad*:

My goud blayed carrves the casques of men,
My toff lance trustet sure,
My strengt iss ass the strengt off ten
Because my harrt iss pure!

It surely was unfair to make a fellow recite that blurb out loud before all the other fellows, and ferociously correct his accent into the bargain!

The Immigrant, then, was completely ignorant of American letters. The names on America's literary roll of honour meant nothing to him. They mean much to him now, and he feels a glow of personal pride in some of them, for he discovered their treasure for himself, uninfluenced by their fame, their popularity or the ban put upon their writings by Puritanical officials.

He began reading again in a desultory manner. In the magazine rooms of public libraries, in the reading-room at the "Y" he picked up illustrated and non-illustrated magazines, read the fiction therein, and labelled it, for the most part, "rot". Those stories recalled to him his mother's plaintive remark on the Tauchnitz Edition of English novels —"They are nearly always so sillee".

Then, one day, in some forgotten magazine he came across an unforgettable story. He began to read absently, but soon he was lost to all but the vision evoked of an old man in a remote village, going from door to door in search of his dead wife. The story was called *The Lost Phoebe* and was so sharply beautiful that he caught his breath as he read on to the end. The name of the author was Theodore Dreiser, and the Immigrant followed up that name with expectation that was disappointed. He simply could not wade through *Sister Carrie* and the fine realism of *An American Tragedy* was marred, for him, by a mass of detail as lifeless as a catalogue.

His second find was *The Hairy Ape*. He finished it at a sitting and was consequently late at the workshop that afternoon. He caught a persistent note from Leonid Andreyev as he read, and thought of *King Hunger*. Later on he recognized the Russian strain in *Desire Under the Elms* which reminded him of Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness*. Eugene O'Neill stands on a pedestal in the Immigrant's treasure-house to this day, though *Strange Interlude* gave that pedestal a horrid jerk. He read a book of short stories by a man called O. Henry and dismissed

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them as ingeniously treated anecdotes. When he discovered that O. Henry is a big name in American letters he was surprised but not converted.

He remembers the day when he came across *False Dawn* which he enjoyed immensely. "Amazingly well done—for a woman", was his verdict, but when, following the Edith Wharton clue, he came upon the flawless treasure of *Ethan Frome* he was ashamed of that condescension.

Another lucky find was the buried treasure of *The Octopus*, by Frank Norris, which he unearthed from the depths of his landlady's bookcase which was also a receptacle for coffee and tea and biscuit-tins. The good woman had not the slightest idea of the value of that find, and let him keep it. In the same place he discovered *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* which he read with considerable pleasure, though he still has no idea what the title means and has forgotten the name of the author.

The Bright Shawl put him on the trail of *Balisand* in which he revelled for a whole week of evenings. Slowly he read it, relishing every line, feeling himself once more at home, for *Balisand* might have been his own grandfather, the darkies stood for serfs, and the whole atmosphere of the story is that of the Russian manor before the "Freedom" of 1861. Joseph Hergesheimer was one of the Immigrant's luckiest finds.

DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* was a treasure in itself but as a clue led nowhere. He thought for a long time that Willa Cather was a man and enjoyed "him".

He tried to read a book called *Lummox* which seemed to him promising, but the language of it was so twisted and tortured that he had to give it up, and could never bring himself to attack another book, or even story, by Fannie Hurst. *The Virginian* was a real joy to him, but somehow he has never come across another novel by Owen Wister.

He began *The Volga Boatman*, swore vigorously in vigorous Russian and flung it aside. He liked Bercovici's gipsy stories, though.

The Immigrant's reading has now lost its excitement as an individual treasure-hunt. He subscribes to a lending library, reads the always clever book-reviews, goes after the best-sellers and usually agrees with the verdict of the critics and the reading public who follow their lead. But in a few cases he stands alone. He has failed in an honest attempt to appreciate Sinclair Lewis, and still loathes *Babbitt*, *Main Street* and *Elmer Gantry*, so considers it hopeless to read the later Lewis novels. Perhaps his judgment is warped by the bad impression received from a magazine story, with a Russian background, in which the author of *Main Street* repeated the commonest mistakes. The Immigrant does not blame inconspicuous writers for such faults, but Sinclair Lewis is big enough to know better.

The only book on Russia which the Immigrant finds right in every respect and every detail is Father Walsh's *The Fall of the Russian Empire*. All others that he has read betray the natural ignorance of the foreigner in almost every line. Of course he is not criticizing any author's political point of view.

Then, though he enjoyed *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, the Immigrant yawned over *The Woman of Andros*, and he frankly abhors all war novels and plays, even those he managed to read to the finish. He has had too much of the real thing to relish reading about it.

Another of his aversions is Philo Vance, though there are several less irritating detectives whose puzzles he makes his own.

His latest literary joy is *The Story of San Michele*, but he did not discover that jewel by himself, and it cannot be placed among the treasure-trove of his adopted country.

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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

by Edwin Muir

In the general eclipse of Victorian reputations no one, possibly, has suffered more than Stevenson. For while the fillip of ironical or hostile criticism has galvanized his colleagues into a new life—a life which is probably unwelcome to them—Stevenson has simply fallen out of the procession. He is still read by the vulgar, but he has joined that band of writers on whom, by tacit consent, the serious critics have nothing to say. So extraordinary, indeed, is the neglect into which he has fallen that when one surveys his period, the period of Meredith, Hardy, Swinburne, Bridges, Pater, Henry James, Mr. George Moore, Mr. Kipling and Mr. Shaw, it is only by an effort of memory that one contrives to include him. Partly, no doubt, this has been brought about by the overwhelming triumph of two movements: the sociological propagandist movement represented by Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells, and the realistic movement inaugurated in England by Gissing and Mr. George Moore, carried on by Mr. Galsworthy, and still busily practised by a few hundred novelists. This latter movement was so powerful some years ago that when Mr. Frank Swinnerton wrote his intelligent and destructive book on Stevenson it seemed final. For some time, however, the realistic convention has itself been disintegrating under criticism, and so it is more easy to see Stevenson now with unpartisan eyes.

Stevenson died in 1894 in his forty-fourth year. That is to say, he was still, for a novelist, a young man. Moreover, he was younger than his years, for he had spent his childhood and youth in a country where everything combined to prevent an imaginative writer from coming to maturity. After three centuries of a culture almost exclusively theological, imaginative literature in Scotland in Stevenson's time was tolerated, where it was tolerated at all, only as an idle toy. That a novel should influence the character or humanize the emotions was an un-Scottish idea; and if Stevenson's relatives and advisers had envisaged such a secular operation it would have seemed to them illegitimate and insidious; for in the novel, morality, which should come uncontaminated from its pure source in religion or philosophy, entered the character by clandestine ways, indeed stole past the conscience after having lulled it to sleep, and took the soul by carnal wiles.

So one of the earliest ideas which must have been implanted in Stevenson's mind by universal suggestion was that story-telling was an idle occupation, and could be tolerated only as long as it remained so. He had before him, moreover, the example of his great countryman, Scott, and he was probably too young, and too securely enclosed within national literary prejudice, to see that Scott's immense powers too were made idle by the general expectation of his countrymen that they should be idle. Scott's fate indeed was typical of the fate of all Scottish imagina-

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tive writers since the Reformation who have not been, like Carlyle, directly and loudly concerned with ethics. For in a country whose culture is almost exclusively religious, conscience finally becomes a matter concerned with only two spheres, the theological and the crudely material. There is no soil in which an artistic or imaginative conscience might grow, and no function for the novelist therefore except that of a public entertainer. If he refuses to accept the rôle he can, it is true, hit back at his audience as George Douglas did so savagely in *The House With the Green Shutters*. But that is after all an unprofitable indulgence, and for criticism at once serious and urbane, the civilizing delineation of Fielding or Thackeray, there is little scope in Scotland now, and there was hardly any at all in Stevenson's day. So one may account in great measure for the tragedies of Scott, Stevenson and Sir James Barrie, all of them writers of genius, and all of them stultified. What distinguishes Stevenson, however, from the other novelists of his race, is that he was not eagerly ready to be stultified; he suffered under his annulment and struggled against it; he strove to become the writer he was by endowment; he persistently aspired to be something more than a purveyor of light relaxation for serious church-goers; and there is little doubt that had he lived he would have been the first Scottish novelist in the full humanistic tradition.

There was another constricting national influence which Stevenson, like his most notable predecessor, had to struggle against, and overcame only in the last book he wrote. For Scotland was not only a religious, it was also a puritanical country, and not only puritanical, but one where puritanism had withered into a dry gentility. There was little gentility about puritanism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; on the contrary it was an extremely frank creed, calling wickedness by its bluntest objective names; and no words recur oftener in Knox's writings and conversation than "whoredom", "adultery", "fornication", and the like. Yet if an overwhelming pressure of reprobation is directed against any class of transgressions for a great length of time, finally it will become immoral even to mention them; and by Scott's age a convention the direct reverse of Knox's, and yet a belated consequence of it, had come into operation. That convention, the convention of silence, is still the mark of the more puritanical classes in Scotland as elsewhere, and Knox's vocabulary would now seem as indecent to them as D. H. Lawrence's. The effect of this convention on Scott was to make him turn all his heroines into dolls, to deprive them effectually of sex by the simple expedient of depriving them of life; and when he wanted to portray a living woman he had to wait until she had passed the perilous years. In his long and impressive gallery of robust and passionate old women, there is not one but has done something or other in her youth; yet whatever could it have been? The question can no longer be answered; but two things are clear, that it was done sometime or other in the fabulous past, and that it could not be allowed to happen in the *Waverly Novels*. This is how the convention of silence affected Scott. It affected Stevenson in a different way; it made him keep woman out of his novels altogether for a time. He admitted her at last in the guise of Catriona, but there his failure was so lamentable that he might have been pardoned for never having anything to do with women again. He refused to give in, however, and finally he prevailed against the convention; for in his last book he drew full-length portraits of two women, one old and the other young, which are the most natural and exquisite in Scottish fiction.

He shared another fault with Scott, and he has been nauseously praised for his boyish irresponsibility. Yet this too may largely be put down to his early environment. A society which makes a writer a mere entertainer tacitly deprives him of any civic status, puts

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him among the superior mountebanks, and, if he is a man of independence, drives him into a showy Bohemianism. The defiantly picturesque pose which Stevenson assumed was in part at least the cloak under which he hoped to conceal his humiliating function, that of having to please everybody. Yet having a conscience, he began by taking it very seriously; he set out even more deliberately than Scott to please everybody; he insisted indeed almost importunately in pleasing, and convinced himself presently that this was one of the main duties of a writer. Yet at the same time he had an exquisite distaste, an uncannily sharp eye, for the time-server, the ingratiating chatterer, and the type recurs again and again in his stories; he cannot get away from it. Beginning with Ben Gunn in *Treasure Island*, a tender if contemptuous portrait, the type is drawn with an ever colder and more destructive humour in the later stories, until in his last book the subtly repulsive figure of Frank Innes sums up the whole tribe. Is it fanciful to see in those portraits a distorted reflection of Stevenson the teller of time-serving tales in the mind of Stevenson the serious artist and the Calvinist? The Calvinist certainly had something to do with it. Volubility itself is an offence in Puritan countries, but volubility exerted to please is an incomprehensible offence; it is both abject and unnatural. Stevenson was, moreover, an admirer of the hardier virtues; it was one of his complaints that "our civilization is a dingy ungentlemanly business; it drops so much out of a man"; yet he was fated to pursue a vocation which in his own eyes was more accommodating and less perilous than that of a haberdasher or an attorney.

Accepting the vocation of story-teller, however, and at his country's valuation, he was still left with one province where he could assert his independence and vindicate his conscience: the province of language. No matter how idle the tale he had to tell, he was resolved to tell it in words which might have graced the noblest themes. Here he was as nearly incorruptible as a popular entertainer could be. Yet style and content cannot be divorced, and his style suffered in two ways. It was too uniformly literary, and, his function being after all that of a pleasure-maker, it was too anxiously pleasing. Where it displeases us, it is by trying to please too much. If one compares it with the style of a contemporary of Stevenson, a writer whose utterance was just as consciously personal, it becomes light and secondary in spite of all its genuine and laborious graces. The description in *The Master of Ballantrae* of the winter night in which the two brothers fight their duel is one of the finest passages in Stevenson before he found his full powers in *Weir of Hermiston*, and it may serve as a test:

> I took the candlesticks and went before them [the brothers], steps that I would give my hand to recall; but a coward is a slave at the best; and even as I went, my teeth smote against each other in my mouth. It was as he had said: there was no breath stirring; a windless stricture of frost had bound the air; and as we went forth in the shine of the candles, the blackness was like a roof over our heads. Never a word was said; there was never a sound but the creaking of our steps along the frozen path. The cold of the night fell about me like a bucket of water; I shook as I went with more than terror; but my companions, bare-headed like myself, and fresh from the warm hall, appeared not even conscious of the change.

That is vivid and skilful in spite of the touches of affectation, the windless stricture and the smiting teeth. But set it beside a few sentences from Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*, and one feels at once the difference between a writer building up a pleasing romantic picture, and one treating of actual and displeasing things. It is a description of the great eruption of Vesuvius in 1872:

> I approached the dreadful ferment, and watched that fiery pool heaving in the sides and welling over, and swimming in the midst as a

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fount of metal,—and marked how there was cooled in the air a film, like that floating web upon hot milk, a soft drossy scum, which endured but for a moment,—in the next, with terrific blast as of a steam-gun, by the furious breaking in wind of the pent vapours rising from the infernal *magma* beneath, this pan was shot up sheetwise in the air, where, whirling as it rose with rushing sound, the slaggy sheet parted diversely, and I saw it slung out into many great and lesser shreds. The pumy writhen slags fell whissing again in the air, yet soft, from their often half-mile parabolas, the most were great as bricks, a few were huge crusts as flagstones. The pool-side spewed down a reeking gutter of lavas.

From such a comparison there is no escaping; Stevenson's phrases become mere flimsy decoration, and we see that the scene to which they lead up, the whole plot of the story of which that scene is the crisis, the characters, the setting, everything shrinks into decoration. Far the most of what Stevenson wrote withers in this extraordinary fashion. Then, as though, like the hero of one of his stories, he had suddenly been transplanted into a new personality, he began when he was over forty to speak in the unaffected voice of a great writer. For *Weir of Hermiston* is not the greatest novel that he wrote in the Stevensonian manner; it is in a quite new vein which is not properly Stevensonian at all. It is as though a film darkening his genius had suddenly been removed, so that we see in a flash all that he might have become.

The length of time during which this film continued to darken Stevenson's powers is the most melancholy riddle of all. That he should choose romantic themes was comprehensible enough, for he lived in a country where life was drably commercial or genteelly pious, where the diurnal round was unsweetened by culture, and where accordingly beauty and grace were habitually sought in the past and the strange. Habitually, for up to his time the Scottish novel had meant very largely the historical novel. Yet he had a purer literary instinct than any of the other Scottish novelists. What made him continue for so long to avoid the real subject-matter waiting for him, which he ended by treating so superbly? His boyishness, his irresponsibility, his romanticism, these we can see were an escape; yet we do less than justice to him if we think they were an escape merely from the environment which he had known as a child and a youth. They were an escape as well from something far more terrible: from the disease which threatened him so persistently, and which he fought with such genuine courage. One has the painful feeling, reading of the buried treasure which recurs so often in his stories, sometimes indeed quite irrelevantly as though it were an obsession, that we are reading of the treasure of health which he sought for so desperately and never found. His malady indeed colours all his earlier work, both the good and the bad. It may even have been of positive use to him when he set out to draw his brilliant portraits of parsimonious types, such as Ebenezer Balfour in *Kidnapped*; for the compulsory discipline of the invalid, who must learn to dole out his strength daily as though it were an infinitely precious and irreplaceable substance, has points of resemblance with the solicitously cultivated obsession of the miser. Then there is the theme of disinheritance, the subject both of *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, and the one which perhaps adumbrates most pathetically Stevenson's long struggle for his lost heritage of health, for a life as free from sickness as that of his robust heroes. But though disease was the subject he knew most intimately, hardly ever in his stories is it directly introduced, so deep apparently was his need to ignore it if he was to go about his business. So it is only under this flimsy and incongruous fancy-dress costume that we can guess at the real, suffering Stevenson. And when at last the moment of clairvoyance came, and he wrote *Weir of Hermiston*, it was as though he dreaded the

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effort, and felt that he was exposing himself to a fatal peril. Having begun the book he left it aside almost for a year. "Then", says Sidney Colvin, "in the last weeks of his life, he attacked the task again, in a sudden heat of inspiration, and worked at it ardently and without interruption until the end came. No wonder if during these weeks he was sometimes aware of a tension of the spirit difficult to sustain. 'How can I keep this pitch?' he is reported to have said after finishing one of the chapters; and all the world knows how that frail organism in fact betrayed him in mid-effort."

The difference between *Weir of Hermiston* and the other novels is simple and startling: the book is genuine, original and of the first rank from beginning to end. Everything is real. Take the following passage describing young Weir's feelings in church on a spring morning:

> He could not follow the prayer, not even the heads of it. Brightnesses of azure, clouds of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds, rose like exhalations from some deeper, aboriginal memory, that was not his, but belonged to the flesh on his bones. His body remembered; and it seemed to him that his body was in no way gross, but ethereal and perishable like a strain of music; and he felt for it an exquisite tenderness as for a child, an innocent, full of beautiful instincts and destined to an early death. And he felt for old Torrance—of the many supplications, of the few days—a pity that was near to tears.

How tender and yet inflexible that is! It is not the style which we usually think of as Stevenson's. It is at once simple and full, delicate and noble, and without a trace of affectation. And it is the style in which, except for an occasional lapse in the first few chapters, *Weir of Hermiston* is written.

The whole story indeed has a noble gentleness and inflexibility. The figures exist in a spacious dawn, and have the freshness of a morning race, where everyone without effort or distortion is a little above the human scale. All are so heroically complete, like natural objects, trees or rocks, that when the action casts them against one another we fear the injury to those natures which in their power, if not always in their virtues, are so godlike. We fear for them; for all of them, even the Lord Justice-Clerk and the four brothers of Cauldstaneslap, rude and wild as they are, embody something so precious and admirable that it seems unbearable that the action should damage and perhaps destroy it. They are distinguished from Hardy's characters, tragic in a lesser fashion, by their integral and active power. The dramatic conflict is therefore far more intense, the justice more impartial, the outcome more significant; for the outcome with Hardy was, one feels, a foregone conclusion before the action was worked out. Had it been finished *Weir of Hermiston* would have been something unique in fiction, a modern saga, a novel combining two elements which are almost always disjoined: a modern sensibility and a heroic spirit. It is a fragmentary monument not only to Stevenson's own unfulfilled powers, but to an unfulfilled possibility of modern literature. It is, moreover, the one touchstone of his genuine status as a writer, and judging him by it, one can almost say that no other writer of his time showed evidence of equal powers.

So after the sentimental glorification of his contemporaries, and the neglect of his immediate successors, something of Stevenson still remains: a fragment of a masterpiece. The literary fop and the romantic story-teller were very largely make-believe. For the greater part of his life Stevenson played at being a genius. This exasperated his successors—sober realists or busy amateur sociologists—who had no patience with such trifling. They could not know that the poseur playing at being a genius may chance after all to be a genius, a genius quite unlike the mask which has deceived the world and perhaps himself. It is indeed an unlikely contingency, and the disguise was the most

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baffling that could have been found. And moreover it was no doubt the sign of a hidden weakness. Is Stevenson's weakness completely explained by tracing it back to his heredity and early environment, and the disease which he had to fight for so long? Or was there some personal flaw?

Sidney Colvin has a very interesting description of Stevenson at the age of twenty-two in the preface to the *Vailima Letters*:

> To know him was to recognize at once that here was a young genius of whom great things might be expected. A slender, boyish presence, with a graceful, somewhat fantastic bearing, and a singular power and attraction in the eyes and smile . . . a brilliant strain of humour and an unsleeping alertness and adroitness of the critical intelligence . . . in the formation of opinion and the conduct of life impatient, even to excess, of the conventional, the accepted, the trite . . . perceptions and emotions acute and vivid in the extreme . . . judgements, whether founded on experience, reading, discussion, or caprice, not less fresh and personal . . . while to his ardent fancy the world was a theatre glowing with the lights and bustling with the accidents of romance. . . .

Too good to be true, one feels at once, too convincing to be real; it might be the portrait of a man of genius, but it might as well be that of a charming poseur exploiting his attraction. It is in fact both of these inextricably confused, and the author of *Treasure Island* and *The Dynamiters* is as certainly there as that of *Weir of Hermiston*. The description is as elusive as Stevenson's photographs, in which the expression seems continually to be on the point of changing, to be flying away before it can be caught: flying away perhaps to some place so absurdly childish or romantic that even its owner is not quite prepared to countenance it.

An Austrian writer who died a few years ago also had a long struggle with consumption, and also left in his writings a semi-fabulous account of his struggle. Franz Kafka was a far greater writer than Stevenson, and an incomparably greater mind, and his superiority is shown most clearly in the imaginative use he made of his trials. The hero of *The Castle* struggles like Stevenson's romantic heroes for the possession of hidden treasure; it is vouchsafed to him only at the moment of death. What he fights for, however, is not riches or fame, but the solution of the problem of life, and through that for redemption. The struggle is removed from its temporal ground; but it is not falsified, it is universalized. It is simply a starting point from which begins Kafka's enquiry into the problem of destiny. Stevenson had courage in abundance, but he had not the courage which turns the knife in his own wound to investigate it, to discover what it means, or how it can be squared with divine and human ordination. He tried to forget it, and only a moral pedant could condemn him for doing so. But the difficulty about forgetting is that one can rarely forget altogether, and Stevenson only succeeded in doing so when, near the end of his life, a great theme took absolute possession of him. His fate, curiously enough, was the same as that of the hero of *The Castle*; after circuitous wanderings for twenty years he found his mark almost too late. But the mark was a noble one.

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THOSE QUEER PEOPLE WHO WRITE

by Eudora Ramsay Richardson

JAMES BRANCH CABELL and Ellen Glasgow were asked not long ago to prescribe the best preparation for adolescent boys and girls desirous of becoming distinguished writers. Mr. Cabell said college by all means. Miss Glasgow, on the other hand, expressed the belief that formal education tended to hurt the imagination. Mr. Cabell is a college graduate, it will be remembered, and a one-time instructor in Greek and French. Miss Glasgow received her education in her father's library.

These eminent novelists, suggesting courses that act upon each other with the mutual fatality attributed once to a gingham dog and a calico cat, illustrate the uselessness of applying formulae to art. Yet persons within the enchanted circle and without are continually striving to explain genius and to define it in such terms as to make emulation possible.

Perhaps because the average adolescent child dislikes the requirements of the classroom, it has been popular to set down poor scholarship as a characteristic of genius. Soul-searing experiences, poverty, and even starvation are often declared to be the pre-requisites of success in the field of creative literature. Freud and the new psychologists furnished the basis for other explanations of the motivations that lie behind genius, and they have fostered the conviction that all creative work must be accomplished before a writer attains the advanced age of forty-five. So was ushered in the vogue for psycho-analyzing the literary figures of all time. Probers searched for maladjustments in childhood that had sent minds scurrying toward creation and for physical disabilities that demanded the sort of compensation that only writing could bring in satisfying measure. Perhaps the great ado in which the creative and the non-creative classes are involved can be very simply explained: the great like to feel that they have been set apart by a sort of supernal laying on of hands; and those who know themselves to be levelled with the mediocre are consoled by the belief that they have been hampered by external circumstances over which they have had no control.

I know a young writer of considerable promise and some degree of attainment who has accepted all the prevailing fallacies that have to do with the requisites for producing great literature. He appears to believe that a candidate for successful authorship must be an uneducated, starving neurotic with half a dozen complexes and a sufficient number of physical disabilities to render him utterly miserable, and that he must concentrate in art and in life upon the lower stratum of society. With convincing sophistry my friend can produce cases to prove his thesis, though, I think, no instance of an outstanding genius who combines *all* the handicaps he thinks desirable.

Popular as it is now to decry the stand-

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ardizing influences of education, the authors who were never in collegiate halls are coming in for a great deal of publicity. I remain unconvinced, however, that Cambridge, which nurtured Spenser, Marlowe, Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, and Tennyson, and Oxford, which Swinburne attended for three years and which expelled Shelley shortly before graduation for the famous pamphlet defending atheism, would have utterly destroyed the genius of Shakespeare, Keats, and Burns.

The great poets have fed upon a variety of diets and transmuted vastly unpoetic surroundings into song. What could seem less conducive to inspiration than apprenticeship to a surgeon? Yet while he was thus articled Keats began writing his immortal verse. The maturity of Amy Lowell's genius cannot be explained by the lack of a college degree; nor can Edna St. Vincent Millay's divine spark be attributed to Vassar. Harvard did not make Edwin Arlington Robinson a poet, and the manufacture of jewelry seems to have had a negligible influence upon Louis Untermeyer. The Sheffield Scientific School at Yale did not cause William Rose Benét to turn his back upon the muse; nor was Lizette Woodworth Reese less of a poet because she grew up before the day when girls went to college. Neither did Yale standardize the verse of Stephen Vincent Benét.

The preponderance of the evidence is in favour of Mr. Cabell's advice to the ambitious young, though this does not prove that success may not be achieved by way of the careful reading and self-discipline Miss Glasgow suggested to her interviewers. From Spenser to H. G. Wells, the English writers who have received formal education are in the majority, and most of those who did not attend the universities were soundly schooled through other channels, similar to those in which Miss Glasgow's genius was developed. Though Oxford was founded as a *studium generale* in 1167 and though a concourse of clerks gathered at Cambridge as early as the first quarter of the thirteenth century, Chaucer seems to have been educated through contacts with people, through travel and reading. Certainly his work shows wide familiarity with the literature of other countries. The Scotch poet, Drummond of Hawthornden, was one of the early graduates of the University of Edinburgh. Daniel Defoe's father, though a butcher, had means and ambition sufficient to educate his son. Swift was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and Addison of Oxford. Samuel Richardson, one of the few originators of a literary form, guilty as he is of having written the first English novel, received adequate training in the printing business and writing love letters for young ladies. Henry Fielding, who by improving the pattern his predecessor had cut became the foremost novelist of the eighteenth century, attended the University of Leyden. Oliver Goldsmith, though his stand at the foot of his class has brought comfort to the heart of many a lazy student with literary aspirations, was permitted to graduate at the University of Dublin. Poverty kept Samuel Johnson from getting his degree at Oxford when his course was nearing completion. Macaulay graduated from Cambridge, Carlyle from the University of Edinburgh, and Ruskin was carefully and broadly educated by parents, tutors, and by much travel.

The academic level of the nineteenth-century English novelists is offset by the high degree of erudition achieved by their successors outside the usual scholastic paths. Jane Austen and Dickens needed chiefly to understand the people about whom they wrote. Their preparation was perfect for their tasks—Jane Austen's in her father's study and among her father's parishioners; and Dickens's in the home of his Micawber-like father, sporadically at school, doing menial work in the streets, the warehouses, in an attorney's office, and finally reporting for a London newspaper. Dear Sir Walter needed only love for his own romantic Scot-

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land, knowledge of the militant border and of the lake-spattered Highlands, and familiarity with the legends and history that entered into the warp and woof of his country. The study of Gothic achitecture under Sir Arthur Bloomfield, however, seems strange preparation for the man who was to return to Dorchester and interpret with grim fatalism the lives of the Wessex folk who tended their sheep and cut the furze upon the heath. Architecture could no more divert Hardy from the peasants among whom he had spent his youth than the associate editorship of the *Westminster Review,* linguistic studies, and translations of abstruse metaphysical books from German into English could keep George Eliot permanently away from the people of Warwickshire.

Most of the later English writers have either been born into an education or have attained an education by dint of much personal effort. Arnold Bennett, strange as it may seem, was a practicing lawyer before he became editor of the magazine called *Woman* and set forth upon literary ventures; and John Galsworthy was graduated from Oxford in law and admitted to the bar in 1890. H. G. Wells, though his parents expected him to be a shopkeeper and though he has been known to speak disparagingly of the college curriculum, worked assiduously in Huxley's laboratory in order to put himself through London University, where he achieved a degree in science.

In their preparation for careers, American writers present one paradox after another. There's Fannie Hurst, for instance, a graduate of Washington University and a Ph. D. from Columbia, snooted by English professors for constructing sentences that could never be parsed. There's Dorothy Canfield Fisher, with a Bachelor of Philosophy, a Doctor of Philosophy, and three Doctors of Literature, doing her thesis on Corneille and Racine, writing a rhetoric and composition, evolving into books on child and mother psychology, launching into fiction and achieving *The Brimming Cup*, and then bringing out *Her Son's Wife* serially in a woman's magazine. There's H. L. Mencken with a diploma from a polytechnic institute to his credit. There's James Branch Cabell, graduating from the College of William and Mary, teaching for a while, reporting for a newspaper, and then becoming a professional genealogist, for years having precious little time to send his spirit into Poictesme. And, strangest of all, there's Sinclair Lewis, going to Yale, presumably to prepare himself for his task of interpreting America—first to Americans and then to the world.

Contemporary Europeans have equipped themselves for letters with the utmost seriousness. Pierre Louÿs, that pure Hellenist of a Frenchman, was a master antiquarian at the age of twenty-four. Marcel Proust, the son of a distinguished professor of medicine at the University of Paris, was bred in a whole series of class-rooms. Franz Werfel, a Jew born in Prague, did advanced study at Hamburg before he started to enunciate his doctrine of eventual perfectibility. Georges Duhamel was a graduate physician when he joined the group of young poets in the Abbaye de Créteil. Kostes Palamas, who rescued Greek literature from its pseudo-classical gestures and made it a living thing, has spent most of his adult years on the faculty of the University of Athens. Maurice Barrès was educated for the law. So, running through the European constellation, we find that star after star has shone first in academic halls without losing its lustre—Selma Lagerlöff, Maurice Donnay, Benedetto Croce, Charles Péguy, Luigi Pirandello, Henri de Régnier, Jean Giraudoux, Hermann Bahr, Paul Bourget, Francis Jammes, Jakob Wassermann, and many others of varying degrees of importance. The Russians, of course, constitute the notable and wholly unconvincing exceptions. Boris Pilnyak and Vladimir Mayakovsky are not travelling in the academic footsteps of Tolstoy, who at the University of Kazan was trained in the law and

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the languages, or of Turgenev, who was educated at Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Berlin.

All of which proves nothing unless it is that concerning the educational necessities of writers nothing can be proved. Perhaps Joseph Conrad needed not college but his years with the merchant marine. Perhaps Kipling was better off because he returned to India at seventeen to begin his journalistic work. So long as a writer achieves that education that makes it possible for him to produce great literature, it matters not what road he follows. Works of art, however, must spring from an inner fulness of mind and heart. Scamp though he was, François Villon was a vagabond-scholar, serious in so far as his art was concerned. Prescriptions always contain their elements of danger. Yet it would be difficult to show that genius was ever injured by education.

The records indicate, moreover, that starvation is not a pre-requisite to literary eminence. Very few attics, as a matter of fact, have been tenanted by future celebrities. The ancient Caedmon, when he began to sing of the Creation, was comfortably attached to the monastery at Whitby. The greatest of the Anglo-Saxon prose writers was a king—Alfred the Great. John Gower was a man of wealth, owner of at least two manors, known to King Richard II and intimate with the family of John of Gaunt. Chaucer, except for the years between 1386 and 1389, was a favourite at the court, sent abroad on diplomatic missions and handsomely pensioned. From Chaucer to the Elizabethans, writers spent little time combating the wolf at the door. It is true, of course, that John Shakespeare had financial difficulties that fortunately sent his son to London in search of a job. Yet William's histrionic and literary abilities seem to have been quickly recognized by a merry public eager to be entertained. At least we know that at the age of twenty-six he had achieved a position of sufficient prominence as a playwright and actor to attract the jealous ire of Robert Greene, older poet and dramatist. Besides, Shakespeare could have remained in Anne's cottage and managed a fairly comfortable existence, unless it be true that he fled from the wrath of Sir Thomas Lucy or from life with Anne. Though Ben Jonson may have served an apprenticeship in his step-father's profession of bricklaying, he was the son of a clergyman who was by no means destitute, and received his education at the Westminster School. After his fling among the soldiers of the Netherlands, he was very soon seeing his plays produced in London.

Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we find writers seldom applying for attic rooms—not Milton, who was supported for five years after his graduation from Cambridge in a life of studious leisure and travel; nor Dryden, the son of a baronet; nor Defoe; nor Swift, whose influential relative bestowed a secretarial position upon him; nor Joseph Addison, who stepped from Oxford into diplomatic service and thence to chief Secretary of State; nor Samuel Richardson, who practiced his printers' trade and conducted his letter-writing business on the side; nor the majority of the famous writers whose names are grouped in that Age of Romanticism that ended somewhere around 1837.

Nor were the Victorians predominantly in the bread line. George Meredith for a brief period, Dickens in his youth, Tennyson during the fourteen years that he delayed his marriage to Emily Sellwood because while perfecting his art he felt that he could not afford marriage or do the sort of work that would make marriage possible, Thomas Carlyle while he lived at Dumfries where the farm was so quiet that Jane declared that she could hear the sheep nibbling grass a quarter of a mile away, are among the few who can be cited with the mythical William Langland of an earlier day, with Alexander Pope, John Bunyan, Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson, who undoubtedly found pleasure in his "careless impecuniosity", with dear

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Bobby Burns, and with other hungry authors who may be picked from the passing centuries.

I have not the temerity to discuss the finances of contemporary Americans. The Europeans, however, are far enough away to be mentioned with impunity. Outside the Russians, with three or four notable exceptions the writers on the continent who are making real contributions to letters have sprung from the old nobility or from the upper bourgeois and professional classes. There are contemporary Russians who have starved cheerfully—Boris Pilnyak, for instance, Russo-German that he is, now most Russian of the Russians, who suffered with his countrymen and produced *Goly God* to memorialize the terrible year 1918-19, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, whose *Thirteenth Apostle* established him as the poet of the Revolution. It seems necessary, however, that the new Russian literature, like new Russia itself, must be born in travail.

If there is such a thing as a general conclusion that grows out of premises involving the human equation, it would seem, though but few great writers have starved and the majority have lived a bit more comfortably than the rest of the world, that both starvation and affluence have had negligible effects upon the production of literature, and that genius flourishes without regard to these material circumstances.

Nor does it appear that writers are any queerer than other people. Maladjustments and physical disabilities seem to be incidental to genius and not contributing factors thereto. Though there is no way to accumulate necessary statistics for proof, I am willing to hazard the guess that there are as many sane and normal writers as there are sane and normal bankers and lawyers. Certainly for every neurotic writer of my acquaintance I can produce a corresponding banker that is much more cracked and warped. If normal is the term used to denote mediocrity, perhaps writers are not entirely normal human beings. That does not mean, however, that the creators of literature are psychopathic. Chaucer lived amicably with his fellows on a plane which his associates at least interpreted as one of equality. Marlowe was not above having a fine brawl with any one he happened to encounter at a tavern. Shakespeare, hobnobbing with Elizabethans, seemed not to have the least idea of his place among the immortals. Yet undoubtedly Samuel Johnson was a grouch, Swift a misanthrope, and various other writers exceedingly difficult to live with. But how many people from other walks of life are easy to live with? The trouble is, of course, that there are biographers for writers and not for bankers. The Johnsons and the Swifts who make up the rank and file of the business population pass unnoticed, save by their suffering families. Every one of the queer writers, however, is three or four times offset by a cheerful Browning, singing his "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world", or by a placid Tennyson, "believing where he cannot prove". For the schizoid Kant and Rousseau, Erasmus and Goldsmith, Carlyle and George Sand, there are Shakespeare, Macaulay, Jane Austen, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Meredith, and scores of others pursuing the even tenor of their ways.

It may be true that an inferiority complex and an effort to sublimate sex drive most authors to the typewriter. There is scarcely a person, however, who is not conscious of his own inferiority; and if man is as highly sexed as the new psychologists would have us believe, there must be a great deal of sublimation going on outside the writing group as well as within it. The whole of our civilization could be explained by this dual motivation.

Physical disabilities there are among the writing tribe but no more, I think, than among other groups of workers. The Popes of too small stature, the Byrons of club feet, the Stevensons and the Keatses racked by

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tuberculosis, the Dostoievskis, Molières, Flauberts, and Petrarchs hampered by epilepsy are much in the minority and are to be paralleled undoubtedly in other professions. Milton's greatness cannot be attributed to his blindness, for *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, Lycidas,* the sonnets, and the body of the prose work, including the *Areopagitica, A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing,* had all been written before the poet lost his sight.

Turn a biographer loose upon any victim, and the result will be the unearthing of early unhappinesses that led to complexes, inhibitions, and the necessity for compensation of some kind. Then, too, the eminent can indulge queernesses and maladies that would never be tolerated from the rest of us. By the side of the somewhat broken personalities place normal Shakespeare, laughing Chaucer, calm, beauty-loving Spenser, amorous Bobby Burns with his taste for the drink that inebriates, placid, clear-eyed Jane Austen, vigorous Browning, and scores of others who can be easily recalled, and the scale is quickly overbalanced. Run over in your mind the writers whom you know and see if they are half as queer as the friend who fell out with you over politics, as the neighbour who objects to the habits of your dog, as the woman who misjudged your child's harmless prank, as the friends who keep you in a fever with their petty nonsense. I am sometimes inclined to believe that the rest of the world is queer and that writers are the only sane people. I think now of only two or three European authors who seem to be ruled by their complexes. Purpose lies behind the work of Palamas, Mayakovsky, Armando Palacio Valdés, Karel Capek, Henri de Régnier, Paul Bourget, Sibilla Aleramo, and Sigrid Undset but not a purpose warped by a distorted subconscious. Among the queer ones Karl Menninger lists, moreover, there are, I am willing to wager, as many statesmen as writers. The queerness of writers is merely better advertised than that of other groups.

Concerning the termination of the creative powers I fancy a great deal has been said that is not true. Since Osler startled the world two and a half decades ago by seeming to advocate chloroform for the middle-aged, it has been increasingly popular to consider the second half of life the less useful. Undoubtedly we are living in an age when youth is supreme and old age is respected little. Very young adherents of the very new psychology would have us believe that forty marks the beginning of senescence and that, like Nina and Charlie in *Strange Interlude,* we might as well prepare to rot in peace. So James Branch Cabell at fifty says that he has finished his biography and Doctor Collins declared seven years ago that Sherwood Anderson had passed the creative years of his life. Yet Daniel Defoe was nearly sixty when he began to write fiction. Accordingly *Robinson Crusoe,* read and reread by each succeeding generation, was produced by a non-creative senescent. Joseph Conrad had passed thirty-seven when he left the merchant marine, settled in England, and began to write. George Eliot was almost forty when her first book of fiction was published. *Joseph Vance,* William Frend de Morgan's first novel, was written when the author was sixty-seven. Milton was over fifty when he began *Paradise Lost* and nearly sixty when the great poem was published. Yet *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were still to follow. Samuel Richardson originated the English novel after he had passed the half-century mark. And Bernard Shaw and Kipling are still writing, and so, we hear, is Mr. Wells.

The eternal extolling of the lower classes, moreover, as the only stratum that produces human beings upon whom society has not superimposed an impenetrable structure of artificiality grows as tiresome as the antithetical insistence made by blue stockings upon a literature that deals only with the

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upper social levels. Tolstoy's failure to recognize the genius of Shakespeare because Shakespeare was not a propagandist for the lower classes is a commentary upon the great Russian's own limitations. A national literature should have in its pattern the whole social fabric. Edith Wharton does not weave the whole cloth, nor does Viña Delmar. The writer, however, who, like Ellen Glasgow, can write understandingly of both aristocracy and "poor whites" undoubtedly possesses greater genius than the one who knows but a single group. While greater publicity will always be accorded the writer who rises from the slums, certainly the largest contribution to literature has been made by the class with a background of culture.

Accordingly, it would seem that these wandering comments reach the trite conclusion that genius must remain unexplained, that it matters little by what means a writer is educated, whether he starve or be fed, whether he be neurotic or uninterestingly sane, whether he be as ill as Stevenson or as healthy as Robert Browning, whether he spring from royalty as did Anna de Noailles, from the old court aristocracy as did De Régnier, or from the solid middle class as did Thomas Mann, or whether he be the son of the good old woman who mended chairs for the cathedral at Orléans as was Charles Péguy. Mr. Cabell, in prescribing a college education for the potential writer, admitted that no environment is flawless. Geniuses, however, seem to possess a talent for converting flaws to their own high uses.

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ESSAYS IN GRAMMAR

V. IS THE SENTENCE MONOPOLY DOOMED?

by Janet Rankin Aiken

In a previous article of this series I mentioned the non-sentence as one of the five pattern units of English speech. But you will not find the non-sentence in grammar books. For generations children have been taught as if the sentence were all of English grammar, which indeed is defined as "the science of the sentence". In our nurseries of learning most departures from the use of complete sentences are severely criticized.

True, other things besides sentences are bootlegged into English grammar text-books. Under the heading "exclamatory sentence" you may find examples like *how lovely* and *what a pity*, which cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called sentences, lacking, as they do, both subject and verb. And then grammars recognize the "imperative sentence", which is about as much a sentence as a torso is a man. The grammarian wriggles his way past the obvious difficulty by saying that the imperative has a subject, "understood". So has a torso a head understood. The plain fact is that the head isn't there.

In an advanced grammar class we collect instances of departures from grammatical regularity, and the other day a young man proudly dragged in one he had snared in a learned editorial of a ponderous publication. It consisted merely of the three words *on the contrary*. The alleged error consisted in the fact that the phrase began with a capital letter and ended with a period.

I proceeded to justify the author of the editorial. I said that those words constituted a non-sentence and that in practice this form was becoming recognized as legitimate, even if the grammars had not yet admitted it in theory. I pointed out that *on the contrary* was here just as complete a communication as *the contrary is true*. In spite of my words, or because of them, the young man grew mournfuller and mournfuller.

"Perhaps you're right," said he. "All I know is, I couldn't do it. I'd be red-pencilled if I used a non-sentence in a theme in Freshman Composition."

Why is it that grammars do not recognize the non-sentence? It is true that grammars are concerned almost wholly with the written word, while the non-sentence is used mainly in conversation. But this cannot be the reason, for the written non-sentence flares before the grammarian's eyes on bill-boards (*eventually—why not now?*) in the names on envelopes (*Mr. John Smith*; *May 30, The Briggstown Public Library*), and in many other places. This "non-sentence of information" is used in letter headings and on envelopes (*Mr. John Smith*; *May 30, 1931*); it lurks at the beginning of books, periodicals, articles, chapters (*The Newton Bee*; *The Week After*). It is on calling cards, on blotters, in short, it is nearly everywhere we are bound to look. Yet the grammarians don't see it.

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Indeed, until today it has been the rule that such non-sentences, though obviously needing no punctuation, should have periods and commas just as if they belonged to a recognized grammatical group or type. Happily this necessity is disappearing. On a wall I see every now and then appeared an inscription with the name of the author below. Both were duly dotted with periods until the other day, when the building was renovated. Today the periods are gone.

The non-sentence, wide as is its use in written English, is yet more common in conversation. One of its most common forms is that of a response. However much teachers may insist that their pupils make reply to their questions in full sentences ("When did Columbus discover America?" "Columbus discovered America in 1492"), this is a classroom game, not applied to the ordinary uses to life. Ordinarily if I ask "What colour is your new dress?" your reply will consist only of the sufficient word "Green". If I inquire "Where are you going?" you will reply "To the store". Easy, natural speech is full of responses like these.

And besides the response and the non-sentence of information, at least four other non-sentence types may be recognized. There is the exclamatory non-sentence, *oh, bother* or *how sweet*. There is the salutation, *good-morning, yours truly, dear sir*. There is the imperative *come here* or *go away*, which in strict logic belongs with non-sentences. A sixth type consists of the elliptical sentence, *saw Grace today* or *just a minute*, where one or both of the main sentence parts, subject and verb, may be supplied without much difficulty. And finally, we have a few non-sentences which seem to fit nowhere, *the more the merrier* and *how about a game of bridge*. The non-sentence is so common in conversation that it would be possible to converse at length without ever being guilty of a full sentence. And such a conversation, if reported, would contain to a high degree what we recognize as the flavour of the spoken word.

What welcome has modern literature for the non-sentence? I pick up a book I have just been reading, *New Russia's Primer* by M. Ilin, a book composed for children twelve to fourteen years old.

This book fairly bristles with non-sentences. I see "By putting machines on wheels", "And in the peasant household", "Six minutes to the tractor", and "How like an automaton!" besides of course all the common varieties like *why? how? what of it?* and so on. This free use of non-sentences gives the book an extraordinarily intimate effect of direct talk. It harmonizes perfectly with the simple and vivid style.

But this is a translation, you may say. Well, the next book I light upon is the *Collected Poems* of Vachel Lindsay, and I open at random to a poem whose last line runs "End of the factory-window song". On other pages I find imperatives, exclamations, and all the other common forms of the non-sentence, although Lindsay is conservative rather than radical in his use of this construction.

Why multiply examples? You may find non-sentences of one sort or another in any modern author, from Priestley to Wodehouse, from Sandburg to Frost. Modern literature with its predilection for the easy, the conversational, the direct, is bound to turn to this form for tang and flavour. It may not yet be possible to use non-sentences in Freshman Composition, but the *Saturday Evening Post*, yea, the *Atlantic Monthly*, will not disdain them.

Older writers frequently hedged in their handling of non-sentences. The author of *Paul Revere's Ride* began magnificently:

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet—

And then Longfellow had to go on and spoil it by adding "That was all", which indeed grammaticalizes but also ruins the whole effect of swift action, and effect, by

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the way, procured without the use of a single "action word", *i.e.*, verb. If Longfellow had stuck to his non-sentence he would have bettered good verse.

Free verse has done much to emancipate modern poetry from the sentence. Read the first stanza of John Gould Fletcher's *The Stevedores* and you will find it wholly innocent of sentence structure. You do not need to consult the extremists such as Gertrude Stein. Even though the extreme vagaries of the free-verse non-sentence seem to lie in the past, the experimenters have done their bit toward breaking the monopoly heretofore enjoyed by the sentence in English literature.

To be sure, by adding enough words you can make any non-sentence into a sentence, and for this reason the grammarian may argue that the sentence covers the non-sentence as well. But I cannot accept this view of the matter, for two reasons. First, those extra words are not in the mind of the speaker or writer. You don't think (*this is*) *the First National Bank* or *the more* (*there are*) *the merrier* (*we shall be*). The inserting of intrusive words words is a grammarian's trick. It bears small relation to the realities of speech communication.

The second reason why I cannot think of the non-sentence as merely an elliptical sentence lies in the curious fact that the nearer a non-sentence approaches sentence structure without actually attaining it, the more apt it is to grate upon the ear. *Just a minute*, frankly not a sentence, is acceptable; but how about *his reason being that he was tired*? Here we have a fairly good counterfeit of sentence structure, and for that very reason it cannot be allowed. There are good non-sentences and bad non-sentences, and the latter are bad just because they approach the sentence type closely.

A writer—I might almost say a devotee—of the bad non-sentence was Amy Lowell. Take this, from the opening stanza of *Patterns*:

> As I wander down
> The garden paths.

Or this:

> For my passion
> Wars against the stiff brocade.

These constructions offend because they are hairbreadth escapes from sentences, not because they are non-sentences. Notice also that these do not fit under any of the non-sentence types as sketched above. They are anomalous hybrids, neither the one thing nor the other.

In a way I do not blame the schools for being reluctant to recognize the non-sentences and near-sentences, between the expressions which intensify the reader's sense of contact with the writer's mind and the expression which confuses and repels him. But I think we should not look for the easy path in English grammar. We should try rather to teach what is so. And certainly the non-sentence is so.

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A MONTH OF THE THEATRE

THE SEASON RECONSIDERED

by Francis Fergusson

ANYONE who should attempt a brief résumé of the whole season would be either very partial or very daring. There are no generally accepted standards of taste, no well-organized tendencies to describe and contrast. The most expert opinion on our theatre is usually summed up as follows: "You can talk about the 'Art of the Theatre' as much as you like: it isn't Broadway". This is pretty accurate in many ways, yet it leaves a margin unaccounted for, else what would become of all the reviewers of plays? They would join that other "vast army", the army of the unemployed. Nobody would be left to write about the theatre but the statisticians of the trade journals, who, at the end of each season, compile a table showing expenditures, box-office receipts, and the proportion of successes to failures. Since I do not know the business managers, and have seen only about eighty shows since Fall, I cannot produce the figures, but I can tell you that the industry as a whole is unprofitable. In most cases, the producer finds the playgoers' sales-resistance unaccountably high; in others, abnormally low, reaching, with *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, sheer idiotic helplessness. The figures do not tell us why this is. They give us the facts, not the reasons for the facts.

I should say this was because the theatre, unlike other businesses, had to take a blind chance on hitting the taste of the audience. By clever advertising one may create a demand for tooth-paste, astringent lotion, and snake-skin shoes. The product is invented, and then the taste of the customer for that product is artificially induced: the copy-writers, the alert advertisers, build the popular culture around their wares. But the theatre does not lead, it follows. It no longer has the authority of a state institution, like the older continental theatres; it bothers about no classical models, as in the Renaissance, and represents no common religious tradition, like the Greek tragedies. It can only try, with a great assumption of omniscience, to flatter the wearers of snake-skin shoes and the possessors of white-toothed smiles. According to this theory, whoever is nearest spiritually to the audience, will have the final word about the theatre. *Once in a Lifetime* showed us how this works in the movies: Herman Glogauer, with the dollars, bows in obeisance to George, the miraculous nut-eater, chimpanzee-epitome of ninety millions.

The Pulitzer Prize

The existence of the Pulitzer Committee proves that there are still some people who expect more than this from the theatre. Even New York, I believe, contains its serious-minded thousands, who ask nothing better than to be told what to like in the theatre. They are survivors, like our Sherwood Andersons and Willa Cathers, our better play-

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wrights, actors and designers, and the Pulitzer Committee itself, of the Renascence Period, when the Provincetown and the other art theatres were founded, and everybody thought we were about to develop a Native Culture. It is true that some papers suggested that the Pulitzer award be discontinued, feeling, perhaps, that it was out of date, and that nobody respected its point of view any more. Almost all the reviewers disagreed with this year's choice, *Alison's House*, by Susan Glaspell, one of the founders of the old Provincetown. Still, the committee is certainly not interested in the show business, and if its decisions are not to be respected, whose are?

Alison's House itself, as I tried to show when it was first produced, is Chekhovian for its nostalgia tempered by vague idealism, its gloom complicated by love for humanity. But while Chekhov makes us believe that he has the very formula for his shiftless, sensitive gentlefolk, Miss Glaspell, trying to use this formula on a Middle-Western family, leaves us unconvinced. The action of her play therefore becomes monotonous, her characters flat and schematic. All she really gives us of Chekhov is his idea. In the last thirty years the world Chekhov illumined has disappeared. Miss Glaspell lays the scene at the beginning of the century, but she looks at 1900 with borrowed 1900 eyes, and so never makes one feel the fresh impact of experience on an autonomous sensibility.

Lynn Riggs's *Green Grow the Lilacs*, Philip Barry's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Once in a Lifetime*, by Hart and Kaufman, and Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*, were some of the plays suggested as alternatives to *Alison's House*. I should have preferred any one of them to the winner; the one I like best is Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*.

Green Grow the Lilacs is admirable for simplicity and unpretentiousness. Its lyrical impulse, and juicy cowboys' vocabulary, are much fresher than *Alison's House*. Being laid in "America" rather than New York, it might have been expected to appeal to the Pulitzers as well as Miss Glaspell's play. I should reject it precisely because it is too special and provincial, and because it relies too heavily on its atmosphere. Theatrically, it is unskilful.

Once in a Lifetime is contemporary enough, and it is built neatly for a Times Square stage and a Times Square audience. However, what one asks of a contemporary comedy is not so much that it be about current events as that it exhibit their permanent significance or insignificance. Hart and Kaufman make a shrewd picture of Hollywood, but their shrewdness is the myopic, sharp-trading Manhattan kind, which refuses to be cheated all right, but has no time for disinterested laughter. They puncture the movie racket, but from the armoured-car of a rival racket, and they take care to flatter their patrons with an unjustifiably happy finale. If the play rises occasionally to real comedy, it is because of Hugh O'Connell's performance as George Lewis, baby-patron of the stage as well as of the screen.

Tomorrow and Tomorrow, moping thoughtfully, dressing smartly, reading the Bible, picking gooseberries, and asking itself what it is to be "adult" and married, has all the laudable ambitions, but does not quite "come off". Mr. Barry has too personal an interest in his people; stimulating week-end companions they are, but lacking in impressiveness. If Mr. Barry would relax and do a little reading, his gift for the stage might develop into something nearly as important as this play tries to be.

My own candidate for the Pulitzer Prize is Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*. I have already admitted that Mr. Anderson's language is worse than banal. Nobody nowadays can try to talk like Shakespeare without becoming tea-roomy and playing straight into Mr. Lee Simonson's hands. Nevertheless, what I like about the play is Mr. Anderson's use of Elizabeth's story. He lets his Ameri-

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canism take care of itself; he refrains from prophecy in the O'Neill manner; his meaning, striking enough for us, is all realized in the love affair of those two formidable egoists, godless adventurers, caught between their passions and the demands of their ambitions. If the choice of Elizabeth and Essex does not seem necessary, at least it does not seem too arbitrary, and it is very hard nowadays for an author to pick a familiar story and show it as both inevitable and surprising. We know too much about Elizabeth to believe in the accuracy of the figure on the Guild's stage, and our own experience is so fragmentary and unrealized that we cannot easily see it epitomized in any tale. And when every cigar-store displays Petronius side by side with Bret Harte and Zola, how should we pick any particular culture or character to throw light on our own experience? These are some of the difficulties that must confront anyone who, like Mr. Anderson, is looking for a permanent theme and a non-realistic style. But he seems to be looking in the right direction to find a drama that would not have to ask George Lewis's permission to exist.

The Follies

In 1931 Mr. Ziegfeld is still glorifying the American girl with such mass-production professionalism—delivering her (*Happiness in every box*) in such unmistakably store-bought gold-foil and paper lace, that he makes nearly every other big musical show look like amateur theatricals. There are not only the seventy nimble beauties, who dance in everything from Miss-Spence-School modest frocks to Second Avenue powder and rhinestones; there are, better yet, the mild-lovely giantesses, the speechless beautiful show-girls, sedentary and imposing, each of whom exhibits twelve-hundred dollars' worth of languid ostrich plumes and spraying bird-of-paradise feathers. The winners of the Galveston Beauty Contest, Miss Memphis, Miss United States, and Miss Universe, are introduced by Ethel Borden; the Albertina Rasch girls, last seen in *The Wonder-Bar*, do several hula-hulas; and in the very heart of it all, the brightest luminary and most unmoved-mover, stands Gladys Glad in ecstatic contemplation of her own perfection. She is the Spirit of the Follies, and, off stage, the authoress of the column "Beauty Culture" in the *Daily Mirror*. After that, the eight naked ladies reclining on the tusks of papier-mâché elephants might seem an anticlimax, if it weren't that the elephants wave their ears like live ones and advance toward the orchestra, which makes bass noises. In the under-sea glow that floods the stage the audience is seen turning to whisper back and forth that "this is *some* show".

The headline performers include Harry Richman, Jack Pearl, Helen Morgan, Albert Carroll, Hal LeRoy, Mitzi Mayfair, and Buck and Bubbles. What with settings by Joseph Urban, sketches by Mark Hellinger, costumes, curtains, slippers and feathers by the most expensive shops in town, nearly all the caterers of whoopee are represented. I found Helen Morgan and Albert Carroll rather dim in that gigantic gorgeousness; Harry Richman too hard-working for a warm night, and Jack Pearl stale in stale skits. But the dancers, Hal LeRoy, Mitzi Mayfair, and Buck and Bubbles, were excellent. John Harkrider's costumes, except for the show-girls'—a concession to the Spirit of the Follies—were some of the best I have seen recently. There can be no doubt that Showman Ziegfeld, as *Time* would say, offers the biggest 6-60-worth in town.

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THE COLUMBIA EDITION OF MILTON

by G. R. Elliott

"But now at last the sacred influence". In other words the long awaited Columbia Edition of Milton* begins now to appear. Conceived a quarter of a century ago, begun by Professor Trent, fostered by President Butler, it is being completed by a committee of the English Department of Columbia University, Messrs. Abbott, Ayres, Clark, Erskine, Haller, Krapp, and Trent, headed by Professor Patterson and assisted by many others. The plan is for eighteen volumes, to be issued at intervals during the next four or five years.

The modest preface mentions the "strange fact" that no complete edition of Milton has hitherto been issued. But the times have been against such an edition—chiefly because Milton has been against the times. No one of his great predecessors in poetry has proved to be so utterly uncongenial as he to the main tendencies of the past two hundred years. Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare are more or less adaptable, in one way or another, to the kind of modernism that finds Milton a hopeless misfit. The reason is that Milton set himself rigidly against the unbridled love of nature that rose in the Renaissance and is still with us. And he set himself, by implication, against the romantic paganism that has accompanied it, and against the emotional mysticism that has partly coöperated with it and partly, in mediaevalistic forms, reacted from it extremely. Milton had in himself the proud modern lust of nature, but he subdued it. He displayed it and damned it in his Satan. He refused to find countenance for it in the ancient classics, which he loved as few have loved them. He declined (not without effort, as some passages in his writings betray) the lure of the modern identification of nature and supernature. But he also rejected all facile slurring of nature in favour of the supernature. He scorned institutional religiosity. But he was wary of mystical individualism. He hailed, to be sure, the inner light. But in him it was "Light after light well us'd". Through tireless study of available human traditions, through rational and moral effort, he tried to purify himself towards the "holy Light, ofspring of Heav'n first-born". As for heaven itself, Milton's muse is never quite at ease there. The home of his poetry is

Within the visible Diurnal Spheare;
Standing on Earth, not rapt above the Pole . . .

Yet the outward cosmos, shaped from a chaos of matter and force, is always for him the superficies of an inward universe where human will and reason, under divine grace, must bring light and order, laboriously, into a chaos of apathies and lusts—a "void and formless *infinite*", which would be hopeless if the highest spirit at work in man were not also infinite, if God were not both transcendent and incarnate. Milton is the poet of na-

* *The Works of John Milton: The Poems* (Columbia University Press. Two vols. $10.00 each).

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ture bridled, the poet of nature illumined and ordered by supernature, arduously and inwardly. No wonder he is repugnant to those who believe nature is ordered only by itself, or not at all, or by outward labour and with inward ease.

It is not strange, therefore, that no complete edition of him has appeared heretofore. But happily it is not too strange that one is being issued now—at the very hub of the nation that has come to lead the modern world in blind devotion to material nature while her intellectuals have carried naturistic ideology to its most blatant extremes. For where the whirl is giddiest, the need of some pause and reverse is most striking. The present staggering state of modern naturalism throws into relief the great writer who decisively rejected it in the very beginning of its dance. No doubt he rejected it too absolutely. But the Romantic legend that he crushed nature within himself, mutilating his own temperament, has been dispelled by recent scholarship. And the steady, hopeful cheer that he achieved in the face of extraordinary disasters, loss of love and eyesight and fortune and of his dearest wishes for church and state—in contrast with the dubious mood of our modern devotees of nature, poetic, philosophic, and economic—arouses, at the least, our wondering curiosity. Anyone who has watched the signs in the literary sky during the past ten or twenty years can have no doubt of an increasing desire for a fresh, full, and unbiased *reading* of Milton. The Columbia Edition is timely, and it is appropriate.

Designed and manufactured by the House of W. E. Rudge, it is a sober delight for hand and eye. Bound in warm brown cloth, printed in large, thin types on cream paper with very ample margins, it is free from all fanciful embellishments and has indeed a Miltonic air of organic elegance. The text, in the case of all works published in the author's lifetime, is based on the latest editions that appeared before his death. Peculiarities of a merely antiquarian interest and annoying to a normal modern reader, such as the old abbreviations of words and the interchange of u and v, have not been retained. But the original spelling and punctuation are carefully reproduced. This is particularly important in the case of a writer so careful and so keenly alive to tone-values as Milton. For him orthography is a poetic instrument, though his usages are rarely if ever carried through his writings consistently. For example, he constantly uses the short "thir" for "their" so as to throw the emphasis upon the following word; on the other hand he continually, though not regularly, lengthens the vowels of singular pronouns for the sake of stress and assonance:

> Not equal, as thir sex not equal seemd;
> For contemplation hee and valour formd,
> For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace . . .

(Incidentally, the capital letter that begins the final word, here, is doubtless a hint of the divinely formed beauty of Eve.) Except in the case of obvious misprints the editors are chary of altering their chosen text, and they promise a full explanation in the case of the slightest change. Most importantly of all, they provide complete lists of the variations found in different editions and manuscripts. In a total of 1152 pages in the two volumes before me (each volume is divided into two separately bound books of handy size) 266 pages are taken up with textual notes and these consist mainly of the records of variations. Each variation, be it only of a single letter, is allowed a full line to itself for convenience of reference. The modern reader is thus to be provided with a handsome, complete, and reasonable text of Milton's verse and prose together with full facilities for deciding, or debating, every shade of his meaning.

Here is one instance for debate. Mr. Patterson follows the edition of 1673 in placing a period at the end of the third verse of *L'Allegro*, where the edition of 1645, fol-

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lowed, as he says, by most modern editors, has no punctuation-mark. He thinks that either reading may be valid. But a good many of us will be certain that the later reading is in very bad taste indeed, spoiling the best sense of the passage and violating the mode of rhythm and syntax that characterizes the twin poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Rather than believe that Milton himself made the alteration we shall decide that, blind and on the verge of death as he was, he did not perfectly check up the printer's proof-reading. We shall be encouraged in our opinion by finding that the 1673 edition places an impossible period at the end of lines 81 and 88 of *Il Penseroso* and that Mr. Patterson has here followed the 1645 edition. And so, to whatever dark reflections the matter has occasioned us, we shall cry

Hence loathed Melancholy
Of *Cerberus*, and blackest midnight born,
In *Stygian* Cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shreiks, and sights unholy . . .

refusing to stop forlornly at "forlorn".

One is glad that the editors have excluded all critical remarks on Milton, with the exception of a quotation from Macaulay by way of motto, a passage true enough in sense though cheap in manner. One may be glad, on the other hand, that the Italian and Latin poems are provided by Arthur Livingston and Charles Knapp, respectively, with accurate and stately translations. Sometimes the stateliness is overdone, as when *l'herbetta strana e bella* becomes "the tender, beauteous flower exotical". But this fault is better than the opposite one, that of reading into Milton a too familiar or romantic spirit, as in William Vaughn Moody's paraphrases. Moody is always charming, for example in his rendering of the passage in the *Epitaphium Damonis* beginning *Pectora cui credam*? But the following by Mr. Knapp is truer to Milton and really finer: "To whom shall I entrust my soul? Who will teach me to lighten consuming cares, who to beguile the long nights with sweet converse, when the mellow pears shall be set hissing by the cheery fire, and the hearth shall crackle with the nuts, the while the evil South Wind confounds all the world outdoors, and thunders down through the elm?" This style is congruous with that of sonnets XX and XXI, where Milton in his native tongue celebrates his hours of intimacy with two other friends. In short, the translations are in keeping with the aim of the editors to exclude all modern idiosyncrasies and to let Milton speak to us in his own way.

This edition of his poetry may be regarded as a superb concrete expression of a new reverence for him, of a growing sense of our need of his poetic and ethical light in the day that now is. We have made love to a kind of darkness that he hated; but now—I trust this hope is not *too* romantic—

But now at last the sacred influence
Of light appears, and from the walls of Heav'n
Shoots farr into the bosom of dim Night
A glimmering dawn . . .

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FICTION

THE ENGLISH CAPTAIN *by L. A. G. Strong* (KNOPF. $2.50)

AUTOLYCUS is unusual company because he is vivid and imaginative; otherwise he would be a ragged, talkative, and disagreeable tramp. In softer terms the same truism holds good of all short stories which protest, as he does, the importance of unconsidered trifles. And since, speaking rather generally, the short story depends upon concrete memory and fugitive incident far more than any other type of literature, its writers can be conveniently divided into two classes: those who indulge their memory at our expense, forgetting that not all trifles are important because they are unconsidered nor all emotions and incidents memorable because they are remembered; and those who unite three of the strongest elements of creative writing—selection, wisdom, and imagination. Mr. Strong clearly belongs to the latter class.

He searches his memory, it is true, but I must add that "I remember" is in one tense and one mood, that there are other tenses and other moods, and that in this book you will find them conjugated now with subtlety, now with irony, now with pain, and always with truth. All these stories, or sketches, or vignettes, or whatever you please to call them, are a search for the exact form in which to express a singular and powerful emotion; and some are not altogether successful, because the form is either unsympathetic or inadequate to the emotion, and there creeps in that inexplicable *sameness* which is the bogy of short story writing.

But there is nothing ingenious or fanciful in his writing—which means that the emotion is always preferred before the form, not the form before the emotion; and that, I fear, is uncommon enough in the short stories of today. There is one piece in particular—*Mr. Kennedy in Charge*—which contains the virtues of all the rest; delicate perception of character, tenderness, vigour, and a sublimation of brute pain. It is a stupendous piece of imaginative writing. It rescues out of the vanishing procession of days one event—an event which, being neither specially beautiful nor singular nor catastrophic, should by all rights have hurried on with the rest—and holds it still in words. A poet can do this with a single epithet; but a prose writer, who is bound to make a virtue of leisure, can do it with just such a *whole* piece of writing as this. Three men go out in the evening to fish for eels, and by the time the eel is caught and slaughtered, the story has gathered into its mood a number of the conflicting parts of life, and reconciled them without insistence and without affectation. You may perhaps read it several times, as I did, without realizing that some of the pleasure you get from it is due to a sheer beauty of writing. As I think of it now it seems to me that the old tag of *aere perennius* has not lost a jot of its meaning. And I wonder whether the generations that come after us, not holding themselves accountable to our tastes and enthusiasms, will hunt in the haystack of contemporary literature and discover needles such as this.

THE GRASSHOPPERS COME *by David Garnett* (BREWER, WARREN & PUTNAM. $2.50)

THERE is a philosophy underneath all David Garnett's work, but it is not a vigorous philosophy and it is almost purely a literary one.

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It sees life as a tragi-comedy into which there has crept something wayward and fantastic and unreal; against the unkindness, at times the ferocity, of human relationships it sets up the comic pattern of life as a whole; and by refusing to face the more obvious (and therefore either unpleasant or monotonous) facts of life it takes pleasure in substituting for them a number of subtle and airy fancies. It is in fact a philosophy of escape, a substitute philosophy, and because at its heart there lies this balance between what is tragic and what is comic, it expresses itself in a quiet and persistent irony. *Lady Into Fox* stands by itself; but when we examine the results of Garnett's move from fable to fiction and remark how his philosophy seems rather to weaken than to mend, it appears that Garnett's salvation does not lie in a sudden turn towards a factual world but in a strengthening of the irony which enables him to turn away from it. It is in these terms that we have to consider *The Grasshoppers Come*. We will no doubt be surprised by its surface unlikeness to anything that Garnett has ever done before. And those of us who have had our faith in him sorely tried in the past few years may have reason to congratulate ourselves that we did not altogether lose it. For the odd thing about the unfamiliarity of *The Grasshoppers Come* in relation to the body of Garnett's work is not that it promises something new but that it assures us of the return of something old.

The story concerns itself with three people who set out on a long distance flight from England across Asia—Mrs. Beanlands, the foolish and wealthy widow who finances the flight, Commander Shap, the navigator who hopes to persuade the lady into letting him marry her money, and Wreaks, the pilot who has been horribly mutilated in the war. All goes well until the borders of Asia are reached, where a burst oil-pipe leads to a forced landing and a wrecked plane. Mrs. Beanlands and Shap set out into the desert to find help, leaving Wreaks, who has hurt his ankle, to fend for himself as best he may. He is pretty near starvation when a swarm of locusts arrives, and to his delight he discovers them to be excellent eating. When he is thoroughly surfeited and they still continue to arrive he begins to see them for what they are, a vile and unreasonable plague, and is driven half mad with disgust. He is eventually saved by a Chinese airman who is also a graduate of Cambridge and whom an enlightened superior has sent out to observe and follow the locust plague. In the fate of the other two Garnett is not interested. I suppose they died.

The three chief characters are, *mutatis mutandis*, pretty familiar, as is the affair between Mrs. Beanlands and Shap; while there is nothing of outstanding merit in Wreaks's experiences so far as they concern Wreaks and human beings in general. Since the book is written, as no other book of Garnett's has been written, in an unpoetic prose, we might be forgiven for supposing that Garnett is bowing himself, awkwardly and without conviction, in the modern Temple of Rimmon—that is, objective realism. It is only in its end that we find a clue to the whole business: in the fact that Wreaks is disposed of by that elderly device, the *deus ex machina*. The least we can say of Garnett is that he is an excellent craftsman, and an excellent craftsman does not employ this device because he can find no other way to finish his story; he employs it because his story has served its purpose and because he is intentionally using as little ceremony as possible in disposing of it. For it is not the adventure of Mrs. Beanlands and Shap and Wreaks that matters, nor even Wreaks's behaviour before and after the arrival of the locusts; it is the locusts themselves—for which all these things provide a contrast. The most private piece of irony in the book occurs in the beginning, and expresses itself in a comparison between the aeroplane and the locust, between the aerodrome and the place where the locust rests—

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and the locust theme is repeated at intervals throughout the story until the swarm itself appears. Coming from nowhere, going nowhere, this swarm is the intrusion of something unreal and fantastic into ordinary life —but it is an intrusion in terms of hard fact and through the medium of a severe and economical prose. This is the irony which justifies the whole book. And if we say that Garnett has become involved in a "stark" and "realistic" world, then we are saying something that is exactly the opposite of the truth; he is actually fortifying himself *against* a stark and realistic world in the only possible way—through a stronger irony. And if, since *Lady Into Fox*, there have been certain obvious breaches in the retreat he has made for himself, they are now being repaired with the stuff of which dreams are not made. In the lowest terms this is a very sensible, in the highest, a very brilliant feat.

The Grasshoppers Come, then, is an important book. But it is important only because of its vigour—of prose and irony; all the qualities we normally associate with Garnett are not to be found in it. We should therefore think of it as an interlude, a pause to gather strength and recover direction. Garnett is still a young man; and though prophecies are idle, I dare suggest that having once surprised and delighted us he will surprise and delight us again. Not with a new fable, which we have no right to expect, but with a new force.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

HATTER'S CASTLE *by A. J. Cronin* (LITTLE, BROWN. $2.50)

It takes a brave writer nowadays to write about Victorians in a Victorian manner, but Doctor Cronin has dared in his first novel to defy the vogue of the sophisticates and of those writers of so-called "epics" and has turned back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The result is a long, solid, meaty book, distinguished for its objective writing and its rich and moving humanity. *Hatter's Castle* is a tragedy of pride. It tells the story of James Brodie, hatter in the Scottish village of Levenford, who thought himself better than other men and whose pride was so great that it wrecked his business, drove his son from home, crushed his wife, and sent his younger daughter to a suicide's grave. On the face of it, this may sound like sodden gloom creaking with all the machinery of Victorian tragedy. But the book is far more. Even if the taint of melodrama touches the story at more than one point, and even if a gray gloom shrouds the entire plot, there is nothing cheap, nothing depressing about the novel.

Doctor Cronin obviously knows his characters. With the exception of Brodie, who is perhaps too heavily delineated, that family housed in an architectural monstrosity which symbolizes the father's pride is a group of real persons. The older sister Mary remains something of a mystery; but Nessie, the younger, is one of the most pathetically real persons in contemporary fiction. The weakling son, the gluttonous grandmother, the drudging wife are all masterpieces of character portrayal.

Of course the book is too long, but the truth is, the actual events in the tale do not matter so much as the inexorable movement of the plot to its anticipated conclusion. The reader watches the decline and fall of James Brodie's household with avid interest induced by the objective writing of Doctor Cronin. Much of the atmospheric background could have been deleted, as well as many of the lengthy conversations between members of the Brodie family. But the story has about it something memorable, something enduring—and that is because it deals with problems and traits close to the center of human experience.

Doctor Cronin is outside the tradition which requires that a writer thrust himself upon his readers. This physician is apparently uninterested in "expressing" himself or show-

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ing off his literary virtuosity. He simply had a story of elemental things to tell and he has told it with rare excellence. He has eschewed that modern idea that there are no sins save sex or that readers must feel sorry for human weakness that is deliberate.

If *Hatter's Castle* falls short of taking its place beside the great novels of English literature, there is still strength and substance enough in it to admit it to the company of books like *Of Human Bondage* and *The Old Wives' Tale*—and that in these days of literary froth is a high distinction.

The book is recommended for readers who want more than light entertainment, readers who like on occasion to fortify themselves with a good solid literary diet. If it is charged that Doctor Cronin's novel is depressing, then the answer is that such depression is dynamic rather than deadening and contains enough of the magic *katharsis* to leave one satisfied that here are truth and fact artistically handled.

ALAN BURTON CLARKE

THE MISTED MIRROR *by Henry Daniel-Rops* (KNOPF. $3.00)

THIS young Frenchman's book is a novel of adolescent struggles, laid in France during the war and post-war periods, and covering about the same span of the hero's life as does *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* It begins in a boarding school. Blaise Orlier —like Joyce's hero, Dedalus—is a renegade Christian. Once greatly impressed by the Catholic belief and greatly under the spell of the priest-teachers of his school, he has become disillusioned with both. He makes an exception in favor of the Abbé Van Vries, whose belief has come to him only after a struggle and whose human understanding is therefore more acute than that of the other mildly assenting or mean fathers of the school. With these few hints, the personality of the Abbé will doubtless rise in its entirety before the reader of this review, for he is, like practically all of M. Daniel-Rops's characters, a stock figure in tales of adolescence.

Perversely defiant towards the school's regulations, Blaise is rusticated, only to return and take first honours in exams. There follows a period at his home in Savoy, with his silent, half-mad father, whose thoughts are filled with some secret sin or sorrow. Hitherto a great solitary himself, Blaise begins to take a part in the shallow and speedy life of the provinces. A little later he goes to a university, where life is simply a mad revel of love, learning, spiritualism, and communism. He falls in with an Irishman (a great satirical portrait, except that, the author being altogether in earnest, the reader has to supply the satirical point of view)—an occult Irishman, who, in some way not clearly specified, destroys what little is left to Blaise of his humanity. In revenge he strangles the sinister Celt's kitten, and returning to Savoy encounters two persons who try to "save" him. One is a young girl and the other the Abbé Van Vries, who has continued to hover on the margin of Blaise's life. Innocence and religion both failing to have an effect, the Abbé is at last reduced to admitting that Blaise is one of those proud lost spirits who always deny.

THE TORCH *by Zsigmond Móricz* (KNOPF. $2.50)

THIS book will baffle all but the stoutest readers of foreign tales of the soil. There are whole pages of local politics and theology; the story turns, in fact, on conditions which we are not made to understand; the psychology is also obscure; and one event does not lead clearly to another, as in the ordinary European novel. It has, however, a few worthy passages, and at least one that is quite memorable. This last occurs at the beginning of the book and describes the entry into a Hungarian village of Miklós, an idealistic young clergyman fresh from the seminary. He very abruptly encounters the greed of the

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peasants and within a few hours his missionary zeal is destroyed. It is not possible to explain the affair here, but it is perhaps enough to say that Miklós finds himself cheated of his first year's salary and unable to retaliate lest he be, as it were, boycotted by the peasants, and starved to death. What follows is less interesting. Miklós continues to struggle with the villagers, and he has, besides, to resist the amorous advances of a middle-aged woman. There is a great fire in which half the population of the village is consumed, and the book ends with Miklós's despair and death. *The Torch* is more realistic than most of the imported epics of the soil. It at least disposes of the sentiment regarding the simple goodness of the peasant, showing him perhaps as even meaner than he is. It seems, however, according to our standards, an unskilfully constructed and confusing story.

FREDERICK DUPEE

A FAREWELL TO INDIA *by Edward Thompson* (DUTTON. $2.50)

EVER since Mr. Forster offered us *A Passage to India*, we have been presented with any number of first, second and third class (not to mention steerage) tickets to the land of Kim and Mahatma Gandhi. Some have been quite good and others have been very dreary. Mother India has had to stand for a lot of portentous writing, fiction and fact, which somehow seems to be closely connected with the existence of a struggle between Indian Nationalism and British Imperialism. It were unfair to call it propaganda, but much of it is propagandist in tone, and *A Farewell to India* is no exception. It stands out as the *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* of the British effort to convince themselves and the Americans that they are doing the right thing in the right way.

It is a novel, but a very thin one, concerning the thoughts, words, acts and deeds of a certain Robert Alden, a British missionary school-teacher at the town of Vishnugram in Bengal. Alden is a man of impish mind and sterling character, an earnest seeker after the Indian truth, adored by his wife Frankie, his sister-in-law Hilda, and an ascetic fellow-missionary named John Findlay, and on terms of intimacy with a Hindu seer named Jayananda. The action of the novel records the events at Vishnugram during the Gandhi agitation, culminating in Robert's physical breakdown.

Much of the book is extremely amusing. Mr. Thompson writes with a light pen and has a congenial sense of humour. Baboo English is always diverting and it is refreshing to hear a Hindu lawyer say "We must do our hook and crook for Mother's [India's] sake" and to hear the innocent school children singing "God Shave the King". Many of the incidents have the inconsequential gaiety of *The Experiences of an Irish R. M.*, to which English critics have compared this book. There is, for instance, the time when three men try to trap a leopard by the time-honoured expedient of tethering a goat and waiting for its bleating to excite the beast of prey. The goat bleated twice and then went to sleep, and was the only member of the party to enjoy a good night's rest.

This is all sugar-coating for Mr. Thompson's "message" on the Indian situation. He thinks that the English are done for in India as a result of some irrational upheaval of the subconscious human mind:

> I think the age from time to time, in one land or another, gets sick of a certain people, and gets rid of them. It isn't reason; it isn't even the sword that kicks them out. It's the *bhuts* (spirits of the earth). They're doing it now with the English, all over the world, and most of all in India.

As for Gandhi, when Alden heard the Mahatma speak, he saw

> a man who had ceased to be one of us, and had become an elemental being—a gust blowing up from the earth, a passion enclosed (and barely enclosed) in a wizened worn-out body. He listened to economics that were twenty years and

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more out of date, and their mistakes were as nothing, beside the fact that centuries of poverty and exploitation had found a voice.

And British policy in India is dismissed with:

We neither govern nor misgovern. We're just hanging on, hoping that the Last Trump will sound "Time!" and save us from the bother of making a decision.

On the other hand, Mr. Thompson is highly sceptical as to the virtues of Indian Nationalism. "Why the devil are patriots always such skunks? And *such* liars?" demands his hero, who foresees an alliance between greed and self-conscious righteousness to drive British rule *and* British goods out of India, for the advantage of Bengali politicians and Bombay manufacturers, and he doubts that "the Indians have made a corner in spirituality and real high nobility of mind". However, with all and in spite of all this, he foresees a successful outcome for the next Round Table Conference, India becoming a Dominion of the British Empire, and everything muddling through (or seeing it through) to a more or less happy ending.

For those who wish to absorb a painless picture of the Indian problem as seen by a British liberal, with broad sympathies and a sceptical mind, *A Farewell to India* offers what Mr. Forster did not—a passage *from* India—a means of labelling and dismissing the major British political problem of the day. This month, if Gandhi comes to London, something definite will be settled and India, like Ireland, will have the opportunity to stew in its own juice, which seems to be the essential object of national self-consciousness. So many of us have become profoundly bored with the nationalism of other people, especially the articulate Asiatics, that—lacking a large Hindu colony in our midst—we shall be only too glad to bid farewell to a subject which never concerned us directly and which is now about to be settled for the time being.

JOHN CARTER

STARRY ADVENTURE *by Mary Austin* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $2.50)

THIS is the old theme of adolescence set in a locale familiar to Mary Austin—that of the Southwest. Since she has at her finger-tips the characteristics and folk-lore of this part of the country, it is no wonder that the best part of her book is the descriptive passages, and that the atmospheric quality runs a close second.

It is the story of Gard, the young brother of Laura, who sees God in the mountains at sunset when he is five years old and who grows up believing in some starry adventure set aside especially for him. The atmosphere in his home remains forever a little beyond his comprehension. His mother, struggling with little money and a tubercular husband, is a minor problem to this boy who has himself so much at heart. It takes his practical sister Laura to point out to him the path of duty. When college has to be forgone he does not see it so until it is conclusively proved to him, and then the yielding is in good grace. When the wealthy Hetheringtons move nearby it is Jane with whom he finds a common speech. The years pass and a quiet accepting love grows between these two young people. Finally Jane asks him to marry her as an escape from another man. This he does. He would do anything for Jane, but when she goes to Italy he falls in love with an eccentric Mrs. Ballintin and has his first affair. Then Eudora Ballintin throws him over. Jane returns, and at last Gard meets the outside world face to face and adjusts himself to it, with Jane's help.

It is necessary to consider Gard an egotist beyond hope. From a small boy of imagination he develops into a slightly stupid youth who cannot see far beyond his own nose. It is disappointing, for the author has made the last years of his development far less interesting than the first, and according to all techniques it should be the other way around. Mary Austin has let her enthusiasm in Gard

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dwindle with the years, and has shifted her interest to other characters. Jane, Eudora Ballintin, Marvin, Gard's business partner, and even his mother hold the reader's interest more closely.

There are too many pages in this book for the time it covers and its psychological import. There are many passages that could have been cut in half and not suffered from it. And yet, considering the thing as a whole, it is a good novel. It builds up its background with unerring accuracy and makes its characters intimately known to the reader. It may even be that Mary Austin meant Gard to give the impression he does, but I am inclined to doubt it. She began his character with every inference of its developing into something touching and magnificently imaginative. She has ended with the touching part remaining, but the imagination and magnificence gone.

SIMPSON: A LIFE *by Edward Sackville-West* (KNOPF. $3.00)

THERE is in this new novel of Mr. Sackville-West's a taste for minute detail. Here is a thorough, unhurried character-study that takes up all of three hundred and sixty-five closely printed pages without one paragraph of lagging interest.

It is the story of Ruth Simpson, who being born in the middle of a good-sized family, finds it her duty to bring up the last two babies. It is her training for her subsequent profession, that of children's nurse. Ruth never has any interest in men, nor desire for babies of her own, and when she gets her one and only proposal she turns it down without a thought. Her path is laid and, like a crusader, she goes out as nursery maid to begin her career. The first family has two children of whom she becomes very fond; she loses this position for not feeding the children the wrong food upon demand of a relative of theirs. From there she goes to the Price-Stables, and is a mother to a little brood there. She could have stayed forever, but with her calm philosophy she knows she must not stay any one place long enough to get too attached to her charges; they will grow up and not need her eventually. In the meantime the gap they have left in her heart must be filled by new children. In the course of her life she nurses an albino, a motherless boy, Salathiel, and finally his German cousin, Childeric. While Simpson is at this last place the war breaks out and she is forced to return to England. Once the war has subsided she remembers her delicate charge, who now is fatherless, and although she is warned that it is a dangerous time to return to Danzig, she ignores the danger. She is conscious only of Childeric, who so badly needs someone to look after him. In Berlin she is killed in a revolution. She dies with Childeric's name on her lips.

The author has written this life with an extraordinary insight into the most commonplace things. He has taken a character difficult to penetrate and produced one of the most sincerely moving and impressive novels I have ever read. His description of Simpson's "temple", which has a window for each child, the episode of her meeting with Peter Price-Stables as a grown man and his subsequent annoyance and embarrassment, her deep love for Salathiel—all these and many other points in the book are brought out with delicacy and sincerity that never once degenerate into dramatics or bathos. Even her death, the method of which leaves every chance for histrionics even with the most careful writing, is handled with a quietness and consistent dignity that prove this author an unusually sensitive and intelligent writer.

Simpson: A Life lives up to the beauty of this man's first novel, *The Ruin*. In fact there is a temptation to say that it is even better, for in this latest book there is a far more difficult theme handled with the same beautiful craftsmanship.

ELIZABETH SANDERSON

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THE FOREST SHIP *by Arnold Höllriegel* (VIKING. $2.50)

STRANGE and distant lands are now enjoying considerable popularity. Novels have their settings in jungles, travel-books give accounts of barbarous places and peoples, journals of explorers narrate adventures in hurdling some one of nature's barriers. Höllriegel for his tale has adopted the inset method. Doctor Bernhard Schwarz, a German schoolmaster, takes the trip of his life and becomes a serio-comic figure in quest of his romantic and impossible ideal, the Amazon jungle. The story of Schwarz and his shipmates makes a rather large frame for the picture, which is given by Hilary the globe-trotter when the voyage up the Amazon has been interrupted and the poor pedagogue's dream has been frustrated. The central history is the true and extraordinary one of Orellana, who first descended the great river from the Andes to the sea in the fifteen-forties.

There is no point in comparing Höllriegel to Conrad and W. H. Hudson or Doctor Schwarz to Don Quixote. But the style is capable and at times beautiful; the work of Ethel Colburn Mayne as translator is to be commended. The extremely romantic tone and the lack of sufficient variety on the ship or in the jungle make for a certain monotony, and at least one major action in Orellana's odyssey is not clear: the story of the relation of the Spaniard to the beautiful Amazon woman is too delirious. It is hard to award the prize among the characters because Höllriegel has been as successful with Schwarz and Orellana as with the less important and least important persons in both groups of actors.

The Forest Ship is worth a reading (though not at one sitting) for its theme and its people; the story lags; the style will charm one reader and cloy another. The malignancy of the jungle is thoroughly communicated, with El Dorado just around the turn; the author does not fail in his efforts to convince us of Curupira, the mysterious god of the forest: "For those Indios (civilized or not) are possessed by superstitious fears and, when they are excited, see the weird Spirit of the Forest everywhere—him whose dearest joy it is to lure mortals from the right path into horrors and perils; deeper and deeper to lure them into the vast mystery of the Amazon jungle. These Indios see him everywhere, everywhere feel his presence—he goes on feet that are of a man and of a jaguar, and he wields an axe of tortoise-shell: they call him Curupira".

RICHMOND P. BOND

AFTER LEAVING MR. MACKENZIE *by Jean Rhys* (KNOPF. $2.00)

THIS is a sordid story, with that especial brand of sordidness lack of money brings; yet one wonders if Julia Martin had had money whether she would have done anything but drift from lover to lover with the same dull throbbing weariness—a weariness that is always described in physical terms. It seems that under any conditions Julia's life would have been sordid; that quality was inevitable in anything occurring to her: she walked into everything "hands down". Life, surely, had used her cruelly, but in that there was only pathos, no tragedy, for it was not her passions that had placed her where she was but her very lack of them. If Mr. Mackenzie's dismissal of his mistress was the thing that "smashed" her up and made her "want to go away and hide", it cannot be regarded so much a result of Mr. Mackenzie's obtuseness and selfishness as the result of a life that, because it was held together by nothing intense, could only eventually disintegrate. Perhaps disintegrate is not the exact word, for Julia's life became the final reduction of what it had been before, only the begging became more obvious, the irresolution was crystallized into doubts what to do the next hour, where to spend the evening.

Miss Rhys has written this novel brilliantly, with an economy that is not the outcome of

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a monotonous formula nor a reflection of the minds of moronic characters. To say that she has left out the irrelevant would be untrue; her effects are largely gained by a judicious use of the irrelevant—the expression on a waiter's face, people in a cinema, paper blown along a street. The use of the word irrelevant is, of course, paradoxical, because Julia's existence and the existence of those with whom she came in contact are somehow made meaningful by these very meaningless odds and ends of observation. As one follows the hopeless course of Julia, lying in bed occupied by thoughts hardly worthy of the name, supplanting the act of judgement by the tooting of taxi horns, one is surprised to find that the meaning of the book as a whole appears just as clearly, and is much the same, as in any tale with a moral. It is no defect in the work.

GEOFFREY STONE

THE PASTOR OF POGGSEE *by Gustav Frenssen* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $2.50)

THERE can be no doubt that this novel of the war, written from the German point of view, is the work of a large-minded and large-hearted man who has looked far and wide into human lives and has pondered deeply what he has seen there. If one does not at once call Gustav Frenssen a man of genius it is partly because we have recently learned to use that word with some caution and partly for the less satisfactory reason that there is nothing odd or eccentric about him. The present book suggests an almost Goethean breadth, harmony, and poise of intellectual powers. It has humour and pathos, literary skill of a high order matched with straight-grained simplicity, the wisdom of culture and the wisdom of the soil. One can place it on the same shelf with the best novels of Thomas Hardy and feel that it belongs there.

The hero is a Holstein minister who, though sprung from the peasantry, has at least one ancestor of whom to be proud. Sturdy in physique, inclined toward sensuality, slow in thought but quick in feeling, pleasantly self-confident yet essentially humble, Adam Barfood represents the best qualities in the Low-Saxon people. The religion he preaches in his days of prosperity is a strange compound of paganism and Christianity, of faith in God and faith in warring spirits of good and evil. When everything else has been taken from him—his children, his money, his home, his good name—by a long series of trials that vaguely recall the Book of Job, he has left the three main treasures with which he began life: his confidence in humanity, in himself, and in nature. His attitude toward nature is something like George Meredith's "religion of earth" without being nearly so intellectual and intricate. Like Hardy's Clym Yeobright, he is shaped by the natural surroundings of his life to ends different from those of his intention; but one need hardly say that Gustav Frenssen, a German of the Goethe tradition, regards Nature as beneficent and her teaching as entirely sound. From her rather than from Christianity the Pastor has drawn his fresh and honest morality, which is a thoughtful reconciliation of the claims of sense with the claims of spirit. Yet there is no suggestion of fatalism in all this; the landscape is never obtruded upon the reader's attention, as it frequently is in Hardy's novels. One is merely made to feel the steady quiet moulding of human lives by the hovering fogs, the level marshy lands, and the neighbouring sea.

If this book gave us nothing more than its poignant picture of the Great War as it was fought out and lost in the hearts of simple and utterly innocent German people, it would be important for that alone. Step by step we follow Pastor Barfood's painful mental pilgrimage, from the conviction that Germany is the only spot of health in a diseased Europe to the realization that, whatever may be the guilt of other nations, she has de-

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served her sufferings. What those sufferings were during the last two years of the war and for a terrible year after the Armistice we are made to see in full and harrowing detail. Frenssen shows that something more than prolonged starvation was involved. He shows that physical misery became so nearly intolerable that it ate at the vitals of society and shook the fundamental faiths that men live by.

From the literary point of view, one of the most admirable things about this book is its sharp delineation of character. A dozen people stand forth in it, carved in the round, with at least the vividness of actual life. They have the inconsistencies of life, for we see them at the same time selfish and self-abnegating, sensual and saintly, wise and foolish, charming and detestable, and—in the remarkable diabolic figure of the Sexton—evil for spiritual reasons. Thus, for example, Adam Barfood and his strong-willed wife quarrel a good deal during their years of good fortune, but when adversity strikes them their underlying fidelity comes at once to the surface. Certainly there are not many more touching scenes in literature than that in which, both of them knowing that their two sons have just fallen at the front, they strive all through the night while lying side by side to keep this knowledge from each other. One has no hesitation in saying that that particular scene is the work of genius. And so, too, is the strange passage, built up out of the simplest materials, in which Adam, crushed almost to earth by his load of shame and sorrow, sits desolate in the open fields, and sees a boy coming towards him:

> He was white and underfed like all the children, but he walked with brave strides in the teeth of the biting east wind, steadily and resolutely, with all the force of grim determination; he was holding a small glass in front of him in his hand, which was blue with cold. It was plain that he was on the way to the doctor and the chemist for some sick man. . . . Adam looked at him as he went. A wave of love and awestruck reverence flooded his heart. A cry went up from him: "Humanity! Humanity! Look . . . there's a man! Everything may be wild and cruel and desolate; life itself may be hidden behind sinister riddles; but man is there, with his serious purpose, his brave determination, his holy faith. I will begin again at the beginning. . . . I will build up my faith upon humanity. I will believe in the individual human being".

In style the novel is copious and fluent without undue elaboration. Nothing is thrust into it by main force, and nothing essential is left out. The invention of incident is remarkably skilful and belief-compelling. As a whole it gives an impression of broad, simple, massive power. The translation, by Katherine G. Potts, is entirely adequate.

ODELL SHEPARD

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BIOGRAPHY

PORTRAITS IN MINIATURE *by Lytton Strachey* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

A FIRST reading of a book by Lytton Strachey must leave us with this above any other feeling: that he is one of the most delightful writers alive. We are put so far in his debt by his style, his wit, his infallible knowledge of what is interesting, that even if we were later able to disprove every word he said we should hardly have cancelled our obligation. There is nothing mysterious about the way he works—he is merely successful at it. His imitators have quite easily deciphered his formula, but their imitations prove that his formula is, if anything, a weakness; it is not his framework but his bricks that reveal Strachey's talent. Though a generation of sceptics who are not scholars may think otherwise, pin-pricking, humanizing, debunking are in themselves unimportant. Any really intelligent person will assume that great men are also bad, or foolish, or intemperate, or tiresome; and the proof that this is true, does not necessarily translate great men into interesting men or even breathing ones. Strachey, almost alone among pin-prickers, has achieved the translation.

Though by no means a companion volume to *Books and Characters*, this new book is in something of the same vein. It deals, however, only with characters. Eighteen people, some of them extremely famous, others extremely obscure, are treated here in the briefest of biographies, their lives spanned in a single curve, their personalities illuminated by a few selected anecdotes. These anecdotes, one need scarcely say, are as descriptive and telltale as possible. If not all of them make the person breathe, they invariably make him interesting; if we could not recognize him wherever we met him, at least we should never mistake him for anybody else.

Of these people, the most obscure are the most delightful, not only because we are discovering them for the first time, but also because they are the most eccentric. Their eccentricities, indeed, are almost all we learn about them, almost the only reason for writing about them. Why else read of John Aubrey who was "clever enough to understand the Newtonian system, but . . . not clever enough to understand that a horoscope was an absurdity"; or of Sir John Harrington, whose writings would bore us but to whom we are indebted for the invention of the water-closet; or of Doctor Colbatch who spent his life trying to dispossess Bentley as Master of Trinity; or of the amazing Muggleston who convinced seventeenth-century England that the Word of God could be enunciated through him alone; or of the equally amazing Doctor North, also a Master of Trinity, who after a life of great earnestness and application was transformed by illness into a tippler and bawdy jokester? True, these men give us something of the spirit of their times, but that is really incidental: for it is not their resemblance to their age which attracts us, but their uniqueness as human beings. And it is purely their eccentricities we are shown, never their normalities. As character-studies they are often examples of the tail wagging the dog; but they were dull old dogs, Mr. Strachey seems to say, and their tails were the only interesting thing about them.

Writing of these people, Mr. Strachey does not illuminate history for us, or criticize human life; he simply provides delightful read-

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ing-matter. His success, of course, is largely due to his literary gifts—his wit, his pulverizing style, his genius for selection; but it is due, too, to his exquisitely malicious curiosity about the idiosyncrasies, the shortcomings, the absurdities in people. Manners, personality, social anomalies enchant him. Though in the last part of this book he proves himself a good critic of historians, he himself is not a historian in any sense. As a reader, the broad movements of history, the interpenetration of human ideas, of economic and political forces, may interest him deeply: but as a writer he is concerned with nothing so wide or so abstract: it is human society affecting the individual, or the individual affecting human society (in the drawing-room sense of the word) that absorbs him. Nobody can equal him at this when he is at his best: in his paper on Madame du Deffand in *Books and Characters* a woman comes astonishingly to life and with her the whole eighteenth-century world in which she moved. That the essays in the present book which treat of kindred people —such as *The Abbé Morellet* or *Madame de Lieven*—are less successful is due first of all to the extreme brevity of their form, secondly to the inferiority of their material. The second reason is more significant than the first; for Strachey's earlier essays of an equal brevity—*Mr. Creevy* or *Lady Hester Stanhope*—excel the present ones. The fault here lies partly in the people: they are good subjects but not the best. But it lies partly with Strachey: he has done wittily and vividly by them, but one detects a certain falling off in verve, in sparkle, in freshness—the Formula is going in for mass production.

The concluding six papers, on six English historians, form a section in this book of their own. As critical summaries of the work of Hume, Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle, Froude and Creighton they are often extremely trenchant, and sometimes give us, epigrammatically, descriptions as good as this one of Victorianism: "an age in which everything was discovered and nothing known, an age in which *all* the outlines were tremendous and all the details sordid". But when he begins to analyze the men themselves, Mr. Strachey makes, over and over, a mistake that has always been common with him. While appearing to explain his people with fresh psychological thoroughness, actually he simplifies them to the point where they become one-dimensional. Everyone must have noticed in *Elizabeth and Essex* how the Queen gradually came to resemble Indecision in a Morality play; here, in the same way, Macaulay is—no more nor less—a Whig, Froude a man who never outgrew his father, Madame de Lieven an aristocrat. The result, in each case, is a portrait of exceptional vividness; Strachey's historical figures, in their concentration upon master-traits, are like Balzac characters. But the artist in Mr. Strachey has driven out the psychologist. These unified, orderly, beautifully emphatic portraits choose to be loyal to art rather than to life. Nothing spills over, nothing remains unaccounted for—nothing about these men is ever irrelevant! In a word, Strachey's characters are not organic, but synthetic.

That Mr. Strachey handles his "eccentrics" in exactly the opposite way—that with Harrington or Aubrey or Doctor North everything spills over, everything is unaccounted for, everything is irrelevant—clinches rather than weakens the case. For the same end is achieved by reversing the Formula: on the one hand it functions to create uniformity of make-up, on the other to create oddity. But someone who is *all* oddity is, in the long run, as one-dimensional and simplified as someone who is all relevancy.

It is not hard to understand why Mr. Strachey, however suggestive, is an untrustworthy psychologist. He has turned his back on modern life. It might be said of him that he is a sophisticated and worldly man in every age except his own; the France of Louis XIV, the England of Queen Anne or the Regency, would find him more than their

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match; but our day leaves him cold, he seldom touches upon it and when he does, his touch is gingerly. He mentions Whitehead not to agree with him or argue against him, but merely with urbane flippancy. I should like nothing better than to read an essay by Mr. Strachey on Freud. Strachey's intelligence is very great, but it works independently of modern thinking, it takes no cognizance of modern knowledge of human character. For all its natural scepticism and sharpness, it is an old-fashioned mind, perfectly attuned to the past; so perfectly, indeed, that it evokes the past rather than illuminates it. And so Strachey sees people, not as they were, but as they plausibly might have been. All his revaluations, it strikes me, will have to be revaluated; and Strachey will be read and admired for his manner and not his judgements.

LOUIS KRONENBERGER

LEIGH HUNT AND HIS CIRCLE *by Edmund Blunden* (HARPERS. $4.00)

THE sub-title of this rich and engrossing book deserves a special emphasis, for Mr. Blunden has brought before us not a single man alone but a society. If Leigh Hunt had genius of any kind it consisted in a quick and eager sympathy with the genius of others, and his best claim to greatness lay in his prophetic comprehension of the several great men whose lives his own life touched and illumined. Although to a superficial view it may appear that he struck out several novelties both of mood and manner that became important in the writing of other men—witness the remarkable likeness between his poetic style and the early poems of John Keats—one finally concludes that his mind was rather sympathetic than originative. It waved so many and such delicate tentacles through the intellectual air that he was enabled, so to speak, to imitate works not yet composed. This served him well in his capacities as critic and literary discoverer. He seemed to know what Keats and Shelley and a dozen other neophytes were to do before they themselves had any clear idea of it, and he praised their future performances by anticipation. No man has ever savoured more keenly than he did "the pure joy of praising", and it still seems to us—perhaps partly because we have not yet passed quite through his critical epoch—that almost always he praised the right things, if not quite always for the right reasons. No critic who has also been a creative writer has ever held himself more free from the belittling jealousies that distort and envenom professional comment upon contemporaries. It would almost seem that he was glad to have other men write better than he could and win the fame which he was always just failing to attain. Good writing in prose or verse, by whomsoever composed, was one of the few luxuries that he could afford, and he enjoyed it as simply and with as little thought of himself as he did the arias of Mozart which he played on his cottage piano. To be sure, he was a little "too soon made glad". With his inborn inclination toward sunny sides and silver linings—and most fortunate it was that he had this—he could usually find something to like in whatever he looked at, and his looks went almost everywhere. The point is, however, that this catholicity of his enjoyment and his constant effort as a journalist to share his pleasures with all the world steadily lengthened the radius of his "circle" until it included nearly all the persons of literary importance who could be met in London during his long lifetime. Mr. Blunden has done well, therefore, in grouping about his central figure, holding them only slightly out of focus, the many friends of Leigh Hunt: Keats and Shelley, Lamb and Hazlitt, Byron and Landor, Browning and Carlyle, Mary Lamb and Mary Shelley, Haydon and Novello, to name only a few of the more famous. There is something significant in the fact that all of these people liked Hunt, that some of them—and the greatest most

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certainly—loved him, and that perhaps only a few felt toward him a deep respect. Fortunately, he was precisely the man to prefer love and liking to respect when he had to choose.

For three or four decades the reputation of Leigh Hunt has been rapidly waning, at least in America, and we now find it hard to understand why Emerson and Hawthorne should have taken the trouble to call upon the aging journalist in his shabby London quarters and should have spoken of him afterwards in tones that suggest affectionate veneration. These two New Englanders were shrewd judges of men, not in the least likely to overestimate any man because of any accident of birth such as that which made Leigh Hunt, the son of two Americans, an Englishman. It seems probable that they were more nearly right than we are. They saw something in Hunt's beautiful courtesy and face for which we cannot allow.

The causes of the decline in Hunt's reputation are not far to seek, and they are interesting. For one thing, the widely accomplished man of letters who can turn a nimble pen from verse to prose, from "creation" to criticism, and from phantasy to something like scholarship, has not now the rarity value that he had a century ago. Hunt's extraordinary charm and fine intelligence were diffused, in a mild lunar glimmering, among so many interests and occupations that he never drew his total force together in any one work which the world could not let die. As Haydon said of him rather wittily, he is "not deep in knowledge moral, metaphysical, or classical, yet he is intense in feeling, and has an intellect forever on the alert. He is like one of those instruments on three legs which, throw it how you will, always pitches on two, and has a spike sticking forever up and ever ready for you". Yes, but if we are to remember a man very long he must be classified under some one category, and, besides that, we are of course unwilling to believe that any man has done even two difficult things equally well. Now we do not know whether to think of Hunt as a poet, an essayist, a critic, a dramatist, a translator, a compiler, a journalist, a man who wrote for love or a man who wrote for money. He was all of these, and he did good work in each of his rôles except the last, but the rôles have proved too many for us to remember, so that we have almost agreed to think of him merely as the man who wrote *Abou Ben Adhem* and *Jenny Kissed Me*. Moreover, nine-tenths of Hunt's literary value lies in the charm and grace that delighted his friends—even dour Carlyle, his Chelsea neighbour, who loved to hear him "chirruping merrily as bird on bough"—and which is still lambent on his printed page. Since the Kipling-Roosevelt era, however, we have been laying a quite effeminate emphasis upon crude masculinity, and we do not count Hunt's grace in his favour. It is so obvious that the man knew how to write that we can only infer that he had "nothing to say". Furthermore, the literary public of our time, which is in fact only a literate public, expects of an author that he shall excite or edify or inform; but Hunt, as a highly intelligent man, does none of these things, and we do not know where to place him.

The best chance of lasting fame for Leigh Hunt seems to rest with those who discover that, although he may have failed at more things than wise men ever attempt, he was all the while superbly successful at being Leigh Hunt. Whatever may be thought of his work, his life was one progressive triumph of heroic gentleness that moved like a melody, half gay and half pensive, through a most discordant seventy years. Like Doctor Johnson, he is more interesting and more important than anything he did. And he is like Ursa Major also in this, that when once we have fallen under his spell we can never know too much about him. (Other resemblances between the two men do not come readily to mind.) Mr. Blunden has come under the spell, and he has spent ten years

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in finding out what he knows about Hunt. And now if we could only have an extensive —one would not say a complete—collection of Hunt's prose we should be in a way to revise a literary estimate which has been based chiefly upon prejudice and ignorance.

In reading Mr. Blunden's book one is thinking all the while, with a queer sense of gratitude to the author, how keenly Hunt himself would have enjoyed it—not so much because it praises him, although no man ever took a more humble and naïve delight in praise than he did, and not even because the style has so much of his own glancing humour, buoyant elasticity, and natural run of the speaking voice. He would like it chiefly because it sets him among his friends and shows that the best of them—Shelley in particular—loved him through good report and evil, as he did them, and for something that lies far deeper in a man than any skill of the pen. And there might be some pleasure to his frustrate ghost in finding that the false impression of his life and character, which he himself could have corrected by a word or two if it had not been for his simple magnanimity, has here been so completely wiped from the slate that anyone who returns to it in future will be at once convicted of ignorance. Instead of regarding him as a sponge upon Byron's bounty, we shall now remember how badly the noble lord came out of, or rather how childishly he ran away from, the Florentine episode. When we think of Hunt's debts and borrowings we shall henceforth recall the cause of them, his mendacious and bibulous wife. When we read the shameful caricature in *Bleak House* we shall never be able to hold anything in it against anyone but Dickens himself. All these matters Mr. Blunden handles without argument or condemnation, letting the facts speak. A letter from Mary Shelley reveals Byron's flight from his obligations. A letter from a family physician tells us all we care to know about Hunt's wife. A letter from Dickens admits that in the portrait of Harold Skimpole he did precisely what he was charged with doing and what in a public pronouncement he managed, by clever tergiversation, in effect to deny.

On the whole, it is the best and the most exact praise of Mr. Blunden's book to say that not only would Hunt have liked to read it but he would have been proud to have written it. As sheer literary craftsmanship, which Hunt knew something about, it is a thing achieved. As historical imagining, it shines with the sober lustre of truth. Most admirable is the skill with which Mr. Blunden takes us round the mysterious corner of time and sets us down in the little companies that used to gather in the Vale of Heath, yet all the while preserves the groupings and perspectives made by these hundred years. Hunt as we know him could not have done this, having neither the patience nor the time. He had the enthusiasm, but it was dispersed and parcelled abroad, and he would never have been able to decide whether to spend a lifetime upon Horace or Ariosto or Spenser. Besides, there was always tomorrow's leader to be written, today's book-review, and this minute's lyric. Being Hunt, in short, was a task which left no leisure for producing masterpieces. But if the gods had granted him patience, if he had learned accuracy, and if he could have found for one book ten years of ripening time, then he might have written a book like this. And that book we should not have forgotten.

ODELL SHEPARD

SHERIDAN: A GHOST STORY *by E. M. Butler* (R. R. SMITH. $4.00)

SHERIDAN was instinctively an artist. At twenty-six he had written one of the finest comedies in English. And then this romantic playboy chose, like Swift and Steele before him, to be more than a writer. To the rôle of playwright he added the parts of a Beau Brummell and a Pitt. He was for some time a successful man of parts. His success in the

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theatre made him Garrick's choice to manage the Drury Lane. But with the passing years he began to pay a heavy price for his three-part activity.

A new biography of Sheridan by E. M. Butler—the first in many years—attempts to assay the enigma of his wit and cheerful personality. It is the contention of Butler that the real Sheridan "disappeared" when he took up politics. Briefly, that an artist lost himself. In probing Sheridan's mind, Butler asserts that Sheridan turned to political action to forget himself, and that the associate of Fox and Burke, the opponent of Pitt, was a ghost of the Sheridan who wrote the plays.

This shows insight into Sheridan's mind and his mental attitude. But a playboy of such gifts has more to him than the urge to escape life. The theatre in Sheridan's time was at a low ebb. From the Restoration to the present century, Sheridan is the only first-rate writer of comedy of manners. There was no competition to incite him to further effort. Without that, and with the low regard with which the society he frequented viewed the playhouse, it was only natural that he would turn to a more respected sphere. And what was more natural, to an Irishman—and especially one gifted oratorically—than to turn to politics?

Sheridan dodged and juggled to his ruin by trying to do what would have been full-time work for three men. He was an important member of the Whig opposition, the manager of Drury Lane and the darling of society. On top of this his vanity provoked him into living beyond his means. But circumstances prompted the fatal steps. Parliament took him from his duties in Drury Lane, and the attention of great ladies kept him from properly preparing his speeches. In this perpetual robbing of Peter to pay Paul his energy was exhausted; an extra tax was applied by the constant pursuit by bailiffs and duns.

It is a wonder Sheridan accomplished what he did; and no wonder at all that he sought consolation in drink. He was a harassed man, deserted by his former kindly fates. Butler does not appear to appreciate fully the sorry trials of the debonair "Sherry". In personal trials and tragic circumstances he wore the mask of comedy. If he really tried to escape life, fate plunged him into a vortex of tumultuous affairs. Was his smile in the face of such conditions a display of character or a pose? It would be extreme to style Sheridan a clown because he had wit with which to face disaster. But that was the accusation, with the charge of "negligence", when the muddled finances of Drury Lane were brought before the Lord Chancellor. But where is the man who could be a leader in parliament, manage a theatre, delight London society, and wisely advise, on the side (fancy that!) that complete bounder, the Prince Regent? It might well be said that Sheridan broke himself by his expenditure of his gifted character.

The artist in him was long neglected, but the artist's point of view was his to the end. It kept his political career from having any adroit opportunism. He was a liberal, and many of his ideas stand scrutiny today. But he was a liberal in a difficult national period —that of the French Revolution—when this cause was unpopular. So old "Sherry" had character, as well as weaknesses, and it was too many rôles—rather than negligence or hard drink—that caught him in the end.

Still, Butler's book is very much worth reading. It is fresh and alive. It is smartly written. It will probably delight and puzzle old "Sherry", if he is half as much a ghost as his latest biographer thinks. But the Sheridans of this world are not to be measured by common rule even if they take to Parliament. And no better leave of him can be taken than to turn to Byron's words: "Such was Sheridan! he could soften an attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus".

EDWIN CLARK

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HARTLEY COLERIDGE: POET'S SON AND POET *by Herbert Hartman.* (OXFORD. $5.00)

DAVID HARTLEY COLERIDGE (1796-1849) was the child of the Romantics. Eldest son of a strange genius, named for a metaphysician in favour, beloved of the Wordsworths and Southeys, he was petted by a distinguished circle. Precocious and imaginative, he inspired large hopes, and provided a model for the "six years' Darling" of Wordsworth's memorable *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. School and university days stimulated, rather than smoothed out, his unnaturalness and eccentricities, until he left Oxford a misinterpreted victim of maladjustment. He spent his life in the Lake Country, rambling, shambling, procrastinating, and endearing himself to the charitable, admiring dalesmen. His literary products were poetry, essays, editions of Massinger and Ford, and biographical sketches. The poetry includes several excellent Wordsworthian sonnets; the prose, readable Elian essays and admirable literary criticism.

It is undeniable that Hartley Coleridge had considerable ability that was only partially utilized. He may be regarded as an evidence of Romanticism gone wrong, or he may be studied psychopathically in relation to such problems as his stunted stature, his consciousness of name, his necessary celibacy. Hartley's personality, weak and gentle, sensitive and simple, is without doubt one of interest, and his associations make him a figure of some consequence in literary history. Abundant explanatory material, from Hartley's own words and from the reports of many major and minor figures, has been gathered by Mr. Hartman, who does not give way to wild speculation on a subject that might have offered temptation. Mr. Hartman's treatment is thoroughly adequate and perhaps pardonably enthusiastic; the style moves despite abundant interwoven quotation. Foot-notes, appendices, bibliography, and index give the book utility and authenticity without sinning against the text; there is no occasion here for the general reader to be naïvely frightened by the trappings of scholarship. Why in such cases may not the unscholarly reader be strong-minded and read only the text?

RICHMOND P. BOND

CLIVE *by R. J. Minney* (APPLETON. $5.00)

THE story of Robert Clive, who laid the foundation of the British Empire in India, is one of a succession of dramatic events, of colour, of human vagaries, follies, passions, with touches of human greatness. It has not been approached by recent biographers, nor have the dramatic values of the material and the fundamental character of Clive been fully exploited. Macaulay's essay remains the best and most vivid popular account, for the present volume, a fairly brief record bound into a large book and sold for five dollars, bearing a resounding send-off by a notoriously genial and friendly professor-critic, must be set down as a disappointment.

Mr. Minney has been honest with the facts. But his own comments and point of view seem strangely at variance with the record he himself has set down. And he has left significant gaps in his story. On page 77, for instance, the reader is astounded to hear, "Clive was rich. In the last two or three years he had amassed a small fortune of 50,000 pounds". When last we heard of his financial situation he was a thirty-pound-a-year clerk. Where Clive got his money is known (chiefly through extortion, "gifts"), but the building up of this fortune and the subsequent one are matters of interest and pertinency in the personal story of Clive and in the history of the British conquest.

Mr. Minney remains a hero-worshipper throughout. He has written a patriotic volume from the British imperialistic point of view. In speaking of England, the British army, or the British government he uses

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the first person plural. It is *we* against the world. How he was able to let some of his statements stand in view of the facts he himself brings out is beyond explanation. "While the English relied on the supremacy of right and justice, the French employed the subversive power of money." True, this statement appears early in the book, but in view of Clive's diplomatic tactics and those of both predecessors and successors, in view, in fact, of the whole situation, no comment could be more absurd. Dupleix, of course, is the villain in the early part of the book. But after that able diplomat has been recalled to France, and after Mr. Minney recounts the story of his poverty and obscure death, the author makes an "about face," does the sporting English thing, and writes a patronizing eulogy over his character and services.

Mr. Minney's method of telling a glamorous bit of eighteenth-century history centering about the figure of a man who, whatever else he may have been, was certainly both able and colourful, varies from part to part. Sometimes he writes in a fashion baldly historical. Sometimes he adopts the method of reciting a mélange of events that were happening contemporaneously all over the globe. Sometimes he switches to the manner of the biographical novelists and invents possible scenes and thoughts and speeches. The book fails to hang together, and Robert Clive, the man, never emerges plainly from its pages. But most of the major facts are here. And it is important that these be recalled to mind as marking the basis upon which rests the British Empire in India.

FRED T. MARSH

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POETRY

JOHN DETH AND OTHER POEMS *by Conrad Aiken* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.50)

THERE are readers who consider Mr. Conrad Aiken a deep thinker and a foremost spokesman of an important modern mood. There are others who refuse to regard him as anything but a consummate musician in words. If he should turn out to be both of these things, and if it were quite clear that his music issues from his thought, then we should have to think of him as a poet of high rank, for of the splendour and power of his music there can be no question among those who have ears to hear.

It is rather his thought that is dubious. One observes, first, that it lacks variety and movement, that it tends toward obsession. Next, one sees that it is far from being original and that it shows no advance upon obvious sources which lie all within the last century and mostly within the last three decades. To most minds of the sort which, with a conscious begging of the question, we may perhaps be allowed to call "healthy", it seems in the third place, false, in the sense that it does not fit experience as they know it. Feverish, morbidly intense, and narrowly concentrated upon a few aspects—chiefly the sexual—of human life it certainly is. Mr. Aiken seems to brood a good deal, and one would say too bitterly, over the text: "Male and female created he them". Most of us have made our peace with the fact that there are two sexes and are thankful that there are not three, or a dozen; but Mr. Aiken, even in his charitable moments, appears to think that the creation of two was a mistake, and in his darker hours he suspects that it was a premeditated cruelty. At all times he takes the fact of sex very hard indeed, so that in his reading of the book of life he does not seem able to get beyond the first chapter. Apparently the proposition that sex is evil, upon which so many changes have been rung by savages and Puritans, is to him axiomatic. In *The Pomecitron Tree* of the present volume he dichotomizes love and lust in a way which, in spite of its remarkable subtlety, looks even to the more old-fashioned of his readers a bit naïve; and in the title-poem he implies that all life is diseased at its very source with the horror and agony and evil of the "lust" from which it issues. He has phrased much of this thought and feeling compactly in an admirable sonnet:

Here's Nature: it's a spider in a flower,
Poison in honey, darkness in delight,
Disastrous doom that tolls delirium's hour,
The arrow of mischief in the brightest light.
What's love, with doubt's slow venom mixed, unless
It be a most ecstatic hue of hate?
Joy, in the heart, grows dumb with bitterness;
The serpent coils bright rings by Eden gate.
Nor can the eye, or cunning brain, remove
Loathing from love, or honour from mistrust;
Horror with beauty wrangles in this love,
The angel wrestles with the fiend of lust.
Not here, not here, will Eros rest his head,
Nor sleep, and smile in sleep, till we be dead.

Something of the mood here so powerfully expressed has been known in all the Christian, all the ascetic, ages, and one cannot forget that it was even more powerfully expressed by Shakespeare in a supreme sonnet, and many times by John Donne. However, there is little indication elsewhere that Mr. Aiken belongs to the ascetic tradition, and it seems probable that "love and lust" would not seem to him such utter enemies if he

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had not met on his mental pilgrimage one Sigmund Freud and failed to pass him—or if he had not tried, and failed, to superimpose the actualities of sex upon a romantic dream. Otto Weininger and von Hartmann are not entirely guiltless of this misery, and neither, perhaps—to go far beyond the limits of the century—is John Donne. But of course it is not the fact that Mr. Aiken's thought has easily discernible sources which makes one doubt its depth. Rather it is that his sources have not been assimilated and transcended. And how is it possible, after all, for his disillusionment and disgust to be so complete as he implies in a world in which the music of strings and of chiming vowels and consonants may still be heard? His quarrel with life is pacified exactly as was the lovers' quarrel which he records:

It was then, when the instant darkened to its darkest,—
When faith was lost with hope, and the rain conspired
To strike its gay arpeggios against our heart-strings,—
When love no longer dared, and scarcely desired:

It was then that suddenly, in the neighbor's room,
The music started: that brave quartette of strings
Breaking out of the stillness, as out of our stillness,
Like the indomitable heart of life that sings

When all is lost; and startled from our sorrow,
Tranced from our grief by that diviner grief,
We raised remembering eyes, each looked at other,
Blinded with tears of joy; and another leaf

Fell silently as that first; and in the instant
The shadow had gone, our quarrel became absurd;
And we rose, to the angelic voices of the music,
And I touched your hand, and we kissed, without a word.

Just so, one would say, our darker obsessions and broodings are constantly challenged and scattered by a music "breaking out of the stillness" from "the indomitable heart of life that sings". Sound and consistent thinking must remember that music, and allow for it in all its constructions of "reality".

Yet one does not wish to suggest that the mental misery shadowed forth in this book and elsewhere by Mr. Aiken is imaginary, for he has gathered most of the materials for at least a romantic woe. (Mr. Harry Hansen has recently remarked of Conrad Aiken that he refuses to romanticize his despair. But what would be the need of that, seeing that his despair is in its origins so obviously romantic?) By familiar stages—a sense of personal idiosyncrasy and special gift, the feeling that this is not duly appreciated, retreat to the "ivory tower", loneliness there, discovery that the innermost self is incommunicable, discovery that it is undiscoverable—he has come, as the French Romantics of eighty years since came, to the realization that even in love there is no escape from solitude, that there is indeed only an aggravation of it, and that

Rock meeting rock can know love better
Than eyes that stare or lips that touch.

In short, he is now imprisoned within the self as Sully-Prudhomme was, but he has a far more highly developed psychological terminology with which to torment himself. He has annihilated all that's made to—a thought no longer green. Inevitably this thought turns inward, divides the man against himself, disintegrates consciousness, as we are made to see rather painfully in the poem *Changing Mind*, until that very self to which the universe had been narrowed down disappears. The whole process is so painful even to watch that one would not care to trace it at all if it were exemplified in a single instance, or only here and there, now and then. But since the time of Vigny —or one might almost as well say since the

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days of Petrarch—this succession of diseases has claimed thousands of minds, and there are still critics naïve and old-fashioned enough as to suppose and almost say that genius consists in succumbing to them. Therefore it becomes necessary for a critic now and then to reassert the fairly obvious truth that genius is far more likely to consist in intellectual health, in a joyous participation in the normal business of living—which is not by any means exclusively intellectual after all—and in partnership with the community of other minds.

The poem *John Deth* is a mass of symbols, to get the inner meaning of which one must be as watchful as in reading *The Faerie Queene*, and when one does get it one is not rewarded by anything deeply true or refreshingly new. At least one of Mr. Aiken's admiring readers wearies of his intricate symbolisms and of asking at every third line what *double entendre* is to be suspected. To one reader, his mingling of an imported philosophy with his native woodnotes often results merely in spoiling two good things and getting neither. From his Freudian complexes and symphonic arrangements one reader has learned to turn away. But when he sings, what a voice! And perhaps it does not after all much matter what he sings when one has learned not to scrutinize his thought too curiously. *John Deth* could be read with keen delight if one knew no English. *Annihilation* and *At a Concert,* without regard to what they say, are noble music.

THE GLORY OF THE NIGHTINGALES

by Edwin Arlington Robinson (MACMILLAN. $2.00)

THIS book is being praised. Perhaps it is also being read. Whether it is being praised intelligently is a question for the cautious reviewer to consider. There is of course a principle of inertia discernible in the estimates we make of contemporary literature which, after operating for a time to keep a writer from his deserts, begins to work in just the opposite direction; and so there comes a time when the suggestion that a poet with a high reputation, honestly won, has done poor work, or is even falling below himself, has the effect of a minor *lèse-majesté*. This is not good for critics or readers. One does not see how it can be helpful even to poets.

To have done as quickly as possible with complaints, one must say first of all that *The Glory of the Nightingales* contains no glory and no song. The two glamorous words of the title seem to have been chosen with sardonic intent. From the subdued and level tone of the blank verse, which is of course everywhere the work of a highly skilled craftsman in words, not one memorable line stands forth. And if, by way of compensation, we are less perplexed than usual by the verbal labyrinths into which Mr. Robinson occasionally leads us, yet even here, and on the first page, we find such a refusal to say a simple thing simply as this:

> . . . He was far from home,
> Or from a place that once had such a name,
> Though not so far now as to be a stranger
> To things familiar and so long forgotten
> As not to be the same, or quite so large.

The story itself is depressing rather than impressive. We see love and friendship ruined, honour sullied, even hatred—the one bright thing before us—made futile, and a firm intention to commit murder foiled by mocking chance. Power and wit and beauty are brought down to a wheel-chair by locomotor ataxia, and an even more deadly bacillus is working at human wills. Four persons are presented, two dimly and two vividly. Of these, one dies of drink after having been bought off from his intention to kill the seducer of his wife. Another, the woman for whom the two main characters contend, dies, apparently because her husband has been reduced to poverty by the treachery of his friend. Nightingale him-

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self is wholly mastered by the lusts of possession, and Malory by hatred. All four are driven to wreck, and the suggestion is everywhere strong that they had not at any time any choice of the roads they travelled. Beyond all this, as though for an ultimate horror, both Malory and Nightingale are compelled by the *Zeitgeist* to make their individual passions and purposes turn the wheels of "social service". Nightingale's great house by the sea and his selfishly won fortune are willed to the public for the founding of a hospital, and in this hospital Malory is to be the chief slave.

Confronted by such dreariness, one looks for some significance in the poem as a whole which may justify a poet of Mr. Robinson's powers in making such an effort. There is no difficulty in finding this parabolic meaning. To phrase it crudely, Mr. Robinson seems to say that in our time the purposes and even the strongest passions of the individual are compelled into channels of no individual's choosing. In order to show this with the greatest possible emphasis he has brought before us two men, one possessed by bitterest hatred and the other coldly selfish in every thought and deed, both of whom are forced to serve not their own ends but those of the public. Pious worshippers of the new god Service may quote "There's a divinity that shapes our ends", but nothing resembling a religious joy is seen in Malory or Nightingale—or, for that matter, in Mr. Robinson's account of them. This conquest of the individual by mere numbers is not a thing for an artist to rejoice in—partly because, so far as we can see in the dim light thrown from the past, it must mean the extinction, among other things, of art. "Those tumbling and unceasing little waves" at which Malory gazed through Nightingale's great window—

. . . They were not his waves,
Yet surely they were flashing with a language
That was important and inevitable;
There were too many of them to be dismissed
By one whose life was only a little more
Of time than one of theirs. . . .
In clouds that came and went, there was at least
A sort of promise, for they came and went;
But here there was a promise of nothing else
Than waves and waves, and then waves, and more waves,
That went and came.

Number, meaningless numerosity, and the blank stare of the sea—of all the gospels ever preached probably the dreariest is this gospel of Service. For of course it is the human multitudes that Malory and Robinson are thinking of, multitudes engulfing all distinction and individuality. So Malory saw them, and saw his future life:

. . . There was no escape
From the long sentence of his usefulness.
He was a slave now in a city of pain,
A pullulating place that was all places,
And soon or late the last abode of man
Till his departure.

It may be, then that Mr. Robinson more or less consciously intended this strange and forbidding narrative poem as a prophecy of years coming on into which neither he nor any other sensible man would care to live. But the poem is not altogether a prophecy; in some respects it is painfully like a description of what we now see about us.

ODELL SHEPARD

RED DRUMMING IN THE SUN *by May Lewis* (KNOPF. $2.00)

MAY LEWIS in her first book of lyrics shows talent: although the emotions stressed herein are somewhat usual and limited in their intensity, although the figures into which these emotions are cast are rather ordinary, there is a precision of phrase, an avoidance of triteness, a hint of an ever-present thinking mind which is the essential core of every song. All of these traits indicate that Miss Lewis is aware of the duty of the poet to observe his physical world exactly and to interpret the emotions felt with individuality.

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The result is that although there are included in this little volume a number of poems which do not come off and would-be satirical observations that are not important, there are also included a handful of very good poems indeed. This, the last stanza of the title-poem, is an example:

That day I heard red drumming in the sun,
And then the throbbing of a grey dove's heart;
At last, that pause when the curved waves count one,
Swing to the beach, sweep outward, and depart.

Other successful lyrics are *Snow Change, The Book, How Delicately the Tree.*

One might say, briefly, that Miss Lewis has a real gift for the exactly turned phrase, a pleasant control of rhythm, and a mind which is self-critical enough to prevent any excursion into sentimentality. Her reactions to life are the usual feminine reactions, but she is more analytical, less falsely pretentious, and considerably more intelligent than many of our lyric singers. For that reason she has much more possibility of growth both in technique and in penetration.

EDA LOU WALTON

EPISTLE TO PROMETHEUS *by Babette Deutsch* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.00)

It is clear that Miss Deutsch's imagination has been moved, as a poet's ought, by the wrongs and degradations of human life and by the contrasting vision of what the human spirit might become, what perhaps the mythological fire-bringer would have had it become. But the poetic achievement of the book is not commensurate with this vision. It is a slight performance for so ambitious a plan. We are given glimpses of the Promethean spirit, its continual defeat and rebirth, in such figures as Christ, Voltaire, Lenin, and Gandhi. But there is a great lack of definiteness in these glimpses. If Christ and Voltaire were embodiments of the same spirit, that spirit must obviously remain somewhat nebulous. Moreover, there is a want of sustained flight in the poem for which a number of graceful passages and lines of considerable force do not compensate. None of the cantos, printed with any degree of solidity, would run to more than a few pages, yet two or three different measures are often employed even in so brief a scope. The divisions are prefixed by quotations which serve to show that Miss Deutsch is a bluestocking as well as a poet. One canto is a single sonnet; at another point a ballade is introduced. But the characteristic measure is a succession of unrhymed or loosely rhymed lines, largely very short, which have a general movement approximating blank verse and might better have been written as such. The device of writing a letter to Prometheus is not a happy one. It suggests those Protestant "long prayers" which used to be ostensibly addressed to God but were really sermons to the congregation. Miss Deutsch is actually apostrophizing Prometheus, but discontented for some reason with this rhetorical device, she turns it into the pseudo-literal device of a letter, which in this case is neither natural nor inherently poetic. Thus, despite fundamental sincerity in her design, Miss Deutsch has not been able to avoid affectations and self-consciousness in the form of her poem.

THEODORE MORRISON

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A VARIED SHELF

ENGLISH BIOGRAPHY BEFORE 1700
by Donald A. Stauffer (HARVARD. $4.00)

No FORM of literature needs definition so much as biography. In the novel a reader knows he is to expect fiction and at the theatre a spectator who misunderstands the reality of the action makes himself ludicrous by shouting advice to the hero, yet both the novel and the drama present a kind of truth. Biography also deals with truth, but a truth to fact, and the use of the materials of fiction —the invention of the appropriate episode or of the speech which ought to have been made—violates this rigid standard. Modern biography, often equipped with a preface promising contributions to history and with copious references to documents, passes itself off as truth to fact, but it is too often a baffling compound of fact and fiction. By employing methods like pseudo-psychology, which provides a vocabulary for making the delicate and uncertain relation of cause and effect in human character, the author is able to assume a godlike superiority in passing judgement. Behind such writing are strange values of human nature. The inner man, the personality, actually an invention of the biographer's, is presented as the real man. At one time such an interpretation might have been made in religious terms, in the belief that what was most real was the soul's relation with God, and at another time the real man was found in his actions. Now he is found in his idlest thoughts and feelings, wherein men are least distinguished one from another, and guessed-at motives become more important than known actions.

The scientific biographer is notoriously deficient in interpretation of character. With a stern regard for truth to facts and a great care in presenting them, he expects that his reader from the multiplicity of details, involving confusions and even contradictions in character, will gain an impression of unity, in short, that the reader will do his own interpreting. Doubtless the interpretations will vary, but that is small concern of the biographer. The modern biographer, however, makes his own unity, simplifying his subject for artistic purposes, with no secret unexposed, no difficulty unexplained. The objections to this method are many. In as artistically effective a scene as Strachey ever composed, Newman is represented as an old and broken man, weeping before the gate of the church at Littlemore, plain proof that at least once in his life Newman gave evidence of regretting his conversion to the Catholic faith. Although there may not be the slightest foundation in fact for such a scene, this scene is entirely true to Strachey's interpretation of Newman's character. For what interests him is the simplification of Newman and Manning, one as selfless and religious, the other as selfish and worldly, and this scene comes as the climax in their dramatic struggle. But what is the relation of this interpretation to the known character of Newman? Strachey can give us no other answer than that according to his judgement and taste it is true, and there the dispute must rest so long as a biographer is so little aware of the requirements of his form and so little held up to those requirements by critical readers.

Mr. Donald A. Stauffer's *English Biography before* 1700 is of particular interest because it is the first serious and complete study of what biography has actually meant from

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its earliest appearance in English to a time when it was made into literature by a master, Izaak Walton. It is illuminating reading for anyone interested in knowing why it has been so much easier to create in the novel a gigantic gallery of lifelike characters than it has been to reproduce in biography the life of an individual who actually lived, for the number of biographies in English which can be called great is extremely small. Not until the fairly recent recognition of the value and interest in a faithful record of human action and conduct in all its peculiarities was biography possible. In the lives of saints and kings of the Middle Ages, where biography was hardly divorced from history and chronicle, the subjects are treated as interesting, not because they were men and women, but because they were saints and kings. In avoiding the trivial, the commonplace, and the unique, early writers succeeded in painting what we would call official portraits, and it took so many years before it was generally accepted that any manifestation of human nature is interesting, even to the preserving for posterity of the scene where Doctor Johnson tried to push a dead cat over a waterfall, that Boswell himself was accused of belitting his subject by exhibiting him as anything but the Great Cham. The history of biography illustrates as well as anything the history of human thought in its shifts from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to modern times, and is one manifestation of the change from the general to the particular way of thinking.

The work of antiquarians searching for records of the past, the growth of the historical mind and the scientific spirit, the increasing articulateness of women, self-centered and introspective, the growing belief in the supreme importance of what we call personality, all contributed to the change which made possible Boswell, Lockhart, and Trevelyan, and now, as in the fulness of time, Strachey, Maurois, and their countless imitators. Therefore the history which Mr. Stauffer has admirably told is not merely literary history with names, dates, and summaries, but one aspect of the history of the human mind.

THEODORE BAIRD

MEXICO: A STUDY OF TWO AMERICAS *by Stuart Chase in collaboration with Marian Tyler* (MACMILLAN. $3.00)

MR. CHASE describes his book as "but the account of a wayfaring economist in a land he does not know much about, but which interests and stimulates him enormously". The substantive thinness of the book would be more apparent were it not for the general liveliness of the style and the picturesqueness of some of the descriptions, for after one has excluded the history, geography, ethnology, archaeology, statistics and other matter presumably drawn from authorities listed in a select bibliography, what is left is mainly a record of observations in a single village pieced out with comments on life in Mexico City and a few other centers and reminiscences of excursions in various parts of the country. With all its limitations, however, the book is both entertaining and illuminating, and the American who really wants to understand Mexico will do well to place it well up towards the head of the list of works that he should read.

As a wayfaring economist, Mr. Chase's main interest in visiting Mexico appears to have been to discover a machineless society, study its ways, and draw such comparisons as were obvious between it and an American Middletown. One gathers that Tepoztlan, the Indian village which was selected, is not entirely lovely to the eye nor agreeable to the nose, but Mr. Chase's running description of its houses and streets, the maize agriculture on which it depends, the food, clothing and domestic habits of its time-careless people, the popular arts which it cultivates, and the round of fiestas and religious celebrations in which it revels, invests it with a charm de-

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pressingly in contrast with the machine-made civilization which grips life by the throat this side of the Rio Grande. What is true of Tepoztlan he finds to be true, in general, of most of the villages in which nine-tenths of the Indian Mexicans live. Most of them are either self-supporting or form parts of a self-supporting region which produces most of its food and buys other necessaries from other villages in the region. Money counts for little in comparison with barter, and it "could be absolutely eliminated and the region still carry on". Hand labour holds out against the machine, and although machine products are appearing, the mind of the villager remains attuned to a machineless age. Time, Mr. Chase thinks, may yet force it into the current that is drawing in the larger towns, but he does not clearly see "the handwriting on the wall which commits Tepoztlan to Western civilization". For this and other signs of steadfastness, with only such reservations as religious dubiety imposes, he devoutly thanks God.

The rest of the book is a medley of impressionistic comment, often penetrating, refreshingly outspoken, and blending fear, antipathy and hope. Mr. Chase looks with apprehension upon the threatened invasion of Mexico by American tourists, lured by the spread of good roads and bent upon having the same kind of hot dogs and other machine luxuries that they have always bought. His special antipathy (he has very few, to his credit be it said) is reserved for the American colony in Mexico City, which he classifies as in the main "on a level with sign-boards and patent medicines". His great hope is that what is distinctive in Mexican civilization may survive, and that Mexico and its people may be understood and respected. If the pervading American contempt for everything not American does not make that hope altogether vain, Mr. Chase's book may be expected to contribute something to its realization.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND
(LIVERIGHT. $3.00)

THE open season for books about Washington, D. C., is upon us, and the country seems to be taking it very calmly. First we had Jay Franklin's light-hearted *What This Country Needs*, an amusing analysis of factors and issues in American government. Presently along came *Mirrors of 1932*, an anonymous and well-informed partisan discussion of the more prominent personalities in the forthcoming presidential election. And now the public is presented with a book, also anonymous, which reads as though it had been prepared by a Soviet of disgruntled journalists, headed by the most dangerous diplomatic correspondent at the capital and by the nosiest and least accurate of Washington's gossipeering columnists.

The result is a naïve and prejudiced account of the nation's capital, a sort of worm's-eye view of national politics, without any sense of perspective or any underlying principle. It is essentially Sunday journalism and of no particular importance. It suffers, moreover, from several grave defects. In the first place, the authors take themselves too seriously and indulge indirectly in the great American game of holier-than-thou. Writing of a small, pure and important group of independent journalists, of whom at least one of the authors of this veiled symposium is a member, they say: "These correspondents constitute the most steadfastly wholesome, enlightened, and constructive force in the nation's capital". In the second place, the book reeks with kitchen-gossip and personalities. The first chapter, about Washington society, should have been omitted, for who in his senses gives a damn about Washington society? While admitting that La Follette's popularity is due "to the fact that he never indulges in personalities. He confines himself, always, strictly to issues and principles", they cannot achieve the same distinction. For example, they describe President Hoover as

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"a fat, harried, and miserably inadequate man", and the House of Representatives as "a cross between a troop of monkeys and a herd of sheep".

The discussion of Secretary Mellon emphasizes the defects of journalism without a point of view. It is, for example, pertinent to note that "as Secretary of the Treasury, he later paid himself a tax refund of $400,000, the largest awarded to any single individual", that his tax reduction program lopped $1,500,000 off his own income tax, that "his estimates for national revenue have been amazingly wide of the mark—never within $100,000,000 of being right and $1,132,000,000 off in 1923", and that during his ten years of office the Treasury has returned or rebated over $3,000,000,000 to big corporations, great estates, et cetera. To dig up and broadcast the story of his divorce and his family relations is, however, more in the tradition of *Town Topics* than of crusading journalism and adds nothing to our political intelligence.

It is a pity that this book should be so written, for it necessarily leads to a backstairs type of inaccuracy which mars the picture of Washington. There is, for example, one paragraph which contains three absolute misstatements of fact. On the other hand, much of the work is really interesting. The discussion of Secretary Stimson and the State Department is thorough, vigorous and pretty fair, except for the fact that, in describing the personnel of the State Department, no mention is made of the Chief of the Far Eastern Division, Stanley Hornbeck, who ranks as one of our ablest and best-informed diplomats. The discussion of the President is venomous and without perspective. Admitting that President Coolidge and Secretary Mellon planted a sort of economic time-bomb under the Hoover Administration, the authors proceed to hold President Hoover responsible for the effects of the explosion. The discussion of the insurgent Senators, though sentimental, is discriminating, and the threnody for Dwight Morrow is a fair reflection of the disappointment felt by liberals at the political evolution of a gifted diplomatist into a stand-pat Senator. However, it is all informative and much of it is true.

The underlying defect of this sort of book is its lack of perspective, of viewpoint, of analysis and, above all, of synthesis. It is myopic and microscopic. It considers Washington and its inmates as things in themselves and fails to link them to the American nation and to the world at large. It is parochial and lacks the "broad, flexible point of view" extolled by P. G. Wodehouse. For Washington is not a city so much as it is a political instrument board. Merely to describe and criticize the instruments is immature and unscientific, at a time when the public needs someone who will interpret them and tell us the essential facts as to our speed, drift, altitude, gas supply, and revolutions per minute. As we head into the air-pocketed areas of 1932, we shall need expert navigation if we are going to make a happy landing, and for that purpose *Washington Merry-Go-Round's* self-conscious, self-righteous, now-it-can-be-told data are without value.

MIRRORS OF 1932 (BREWER, WARREN & PUTNAM. $2.50)

HERE is a book which lacks both the malice of *Washington Merry-Go-Round* and the sparkle of *The Mirrors of Downing Street.* Its authorship is a mystery: Clinton Gilbert, author of *The Mirrors of Washington*, denies that he ever saw the gal and speculation is rife as to which disgruntled Hoovercrat has unburdened himself in these indignant pages.

For it is a book of partisanship gone sour, an appraisal of ten Presidential possibilities for 1932, of which only four are Republicans, and only one earns the author's unqualified approval. Herbert Hoover, according to this political crystal-gazer, has "no spiritual, cultural, political depth", he is "an unpopular and unloved man", his henchmen are prepar-

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ing "another campaign based on sectional, religious and alcoholic prejudices" but can't get away with it. Dwight Morrow is "the poor little rich boy of American politics", a political "misfit", who is "as solid but as unattractive, politically, as a safety deposit box". Gifford Pinchot is "Savonarola on a soap-box. . . . He does not even own the soap-box. No man in America has had so many good issues and handled them so ineptly". Calvin Coolidge "was neither a leader nor an executive. He was a manipulator".

Apparently the Democrats, excepting Baker, are an equally poor lot. Al Smith "has gone high-hat, high-brow and high-life". "The waist line of his trousers and the headline of his derbies have had to be enlarged". Franklin Roosevelt is ruled by expediency and "lacks guts". Joe Robinson "has succumbed to the temptations of a devilishly clever, conservative, Republican capital". Governor Ritchie's "bid for the presidency is based on sentiment rather than sense". Although Owen D. Young "is our first world citizen", "the blood of dictators runs in his veins". "He would combine the worst features of William McKinley and Woodrow Wilson" and under his authority "neither nation nor individual would have the right—or the happiness—of getting out of gear". Newton Baker, one gathers, is super-civilized —"he is a sentimental Stoic"—the only fit recipient for the American presidency. As for the liquor issue, President Hoover is so busy nullifying Prohibition "without benefit of Congress or the courts", that only three men are available for the wet cause—Smith, Baker and Morrow—"honest and forthright men".

Well, what about it? It is all very well to hold up a sort of Presidential picture-gallery —even in the distorting mirrors of partisan prejudice—and some of the information and anecdotes are of real interest on the side of personalities. The book, however, is so thoroughly permeated with the author's initial disgust with the present President that if the case against Mr. Hoover falls to the ground the whole book collapses like a house of cards. Signs are multiplying that Hoover's "unpopularity" is on the wane. By the time November, 1932, rolls around the country may have come to the conclusion that a President is not entrusted, either personally or politically, with the keys of economic Heaven and Hell, and that his "failures" have been due in great part to circumstances over which he has had no control. The fact that "spiritual and physical loneliness bow him down" is not, as the author seems to believe, an argument against him. While it may be true that "the President of the United States must be ninety percent politician, ten percent executive", it is also true that politics eludes definition except as a way of persuading people to get things done. Some do it by handshaking and hobnobbing; but the country, as a whole, is weary of leadership of that type. What we should like to see is a political appraisal of the men casually reflected in *Mirrors of 1932*, which would consider, not their private personalities, but their public record as men who have mastered the knack of persuading their fellow citizens and legislatures to take action in the interest of the commonwealth. Anything less than that is mere campaign buncombe, written for the purpose, not of helping the electorate to act intelligently, but to advance the interests of a single party or a single candidate.

JOHN CARTER

INDIVIDUALISM OLD AND NEW *by John Dewey* (MINTON, BALCH. $2.50)

Two sets of readers will like this book: first, the rootless drifting ultra-moderns who know and care nothing about the past; second, those who prefer the world which though now dead at least once existed to one which seems "powerless to be born". The pleasure of the one group will consist in hearty agreement; that of the other in enthusiastic vituperation. The former will not be surprised

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by the numerous declarations with which the publishers have adorned the dust-cover that Professor Dewey is the foremost philosophic thinker of the age; and those of the second group will agree that an age like ours would of course produce, as one of its chief exponents and portents, just such a philosopher. To the majority of readers, however, who think of time as an unbroken continuum, and of the present as mainly the product of the past, the book will be somewhat painfully disturbing because there is so much in it that is vividly right and so much that seems dangerously wrong. An important book on account of its author and the deep significance of its theme, it does not let itself be forgotten. Rather, it sets up a mental argument which increases steadily in acrimony. The present reviewer, at any rate, having read it three times through with alternating cheers and groans, can only say that it seems to split the mind in two, and he has been tempted to cast his report in the form of a dialogue between the right and left lobes of the brain. Though highly unconventional, this method would enhance the accuracy of statement. After all, then, why not?

Right Lobe: Here, at last, is a square facing of the problem, how we are to keep individuality alive in a world of steadily increasing corporate consciousness which seems determined to crush it out. A refreshing thing to find.

Left Lobe: Is any definite answer to that problem proposed?

R. L.: None that I can discover; but facing it is something to be thankful for, because most thinkers either run away from it or seem unaware that it exists. And besides, Dewey has always been opposed to programs that restrict and bind. The good life, to him, is rather an improvisation than the playing of a piece of music memorized or read from the printed page. Just so, the individuality he calls for is essentially indescribable, unpredictable, as life itself is. Its form is in its motion, like that of flowing water or sounding music, and it takes its being "in the very process of creating other things".

L. L.: Yes, that sounds profound and even probable. But what place in this continuously improvised individuality does he ascribe to the influences of the past?

R. L.: Apparently none. As I said, he regards the good life as an improvisation.

L. L.: He thinks, then, does he, that any tyro can strike out better music without a moment's thought than Bach rather painfully and very learnedly composed in the *Chromatic Fantasie and Fugue*?

R. L.: Oh, he probably would not say "better". In fact, he does not seem much concerned with valuations of that kind. What he would say, I guess, is that the improvised music, whether good or bad, is at any rate one's own; and further, that if the improviser could clear his memory of all the old music he had ever heard, then his Impromptu would be not only individual but modern. It would belong wholly to our time—and that he does seem to think is a mark of value.

L. L.: I see. And does Professor Dewey anywhere in this book make one grateful or even respectful reference to what we owe to tradition and the human past?

R. L.: None that I can now recall. You see, he is concerned solely with the present; and he points out that if individuality and culture are to have any real meaning, if indeed they are to continue to exist at all, they must give up their temporal nostalgias and set to work in terms of objective contemporary reality.

L. L.: Yes, I know; that is the way hard-headed people talk to romantic poets and to college professors. But you say that he is discussing culture and individuality?

R. L.: Most of the time.

L. L.: Does he think, then, that these things can be produced in a vacuum, without training or discipline or example?

R. L.: He thinks that training will come from interaction with the present—running

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machines and banks and politics for the public good, and so on; but I do not suppose that he cares much for discipline in the old sense; and examples, or external models of conduct and character, he might think positively harmful.

L. L.: Well then, I'm afraid I don't know what he can possibly mean by "culture".

R. L.: Dewey admits that it is an ambiguous word, but he regards the culture of the individual as equivalent to "an interest in art, science, and philosophy". This personal cultivation does not much concern him here, however, and he prefers to use the word as denoting "the type of emotion and thought that is characteristic of a people and epoch as a whole, an organic intellectual and moral quality". It is in culture of this sort that he considers America lamentably deficient.

L. L.: And why? Is it because she pays too much attention to the past?

R. L.: In a sense, yes. He contends, not originally, that while what he calls a "money culture" and a "machine age" are destroying the old heaven and making a new earth, we still cling to the traditional faiths and ideals produced long ago under conditions utterly different from ours. Especially is this true, he says, in the economic life, which is almost the only life we have. There we hold fast to the old notion of profit to the individual, although on every hand we see the swift and steady growth of corporate production of wealth. The effort of nearly all our business is toward the old goal of personal gain rather than toward the new ideal of social use which the machine and the organization of modern industry indicate. Thus capitalist and worker alike are defrauded of the satisfactions that come of a "shared culture" and from the sense of social solidarity. We are forced to act in terms of the new, but we continue to profess and to think in terms of the old, and this disintegrates our lives. In other words, we are applying artificial respiration to faiths and ideals that could no longer exist without it, and in this sense we pay too much attention to the past.

L. L.: But what would you have? If the modern world cannot develop faiths of its own, of course it must borrow some.

R. L.: Dewey does not think we need to do that. He himself has faith in Science.

L. L.: So I observe. He appears to worship the Dynamo as devoutly as the thirteenth century did the Virgin, and his faith in the Machine is as pious as that of the parents who trusted their infants to the jaws of Moloch—

> Though for the noyse of Drums and Timbrels loud
> Their children's cries unheard, that past through fire
> To his grim Idol.

But if one must choose—and of course one must—I prefer those forms of belief that have given experimental proof of their value, rather than these, for the value of which we have only unfounded vatic assertion.

R. L.: And yet, if the moral and sentimental ideas of the past do not fit the present . . .

L. L.: Well then, so much the worse for it. Come, we have been patient long enough with the insolence of this generation whose sole and transient advantage is that it happens to be still above the sod. What is "the present" anyhow? Something that changes and disappears while we speak the word. Until it is a past, no one can tell us what it is like. And a life conducted, or improvised, according to its supposed dictates would be like a furrow drawn by a drunken ploughman who had fixed his eyes on a grazing cow. No, no! Humanity is rather old, and it has not agonized and toiled for all these ages without finding out a few fundamental facts about itself, without discovering a few faiths and ideals to which we shall do well to pay more than lip-service.

R. L.: But don't you want to live in the twentieth century?

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L. L.: Not particularly. I want to live in all centuries, including this one. That, in fact, is my own notion of what constitutes culture, and also individuality, which is never either "old" or "new".

R. L.: Of course you realize that this attitude is rather quaint and old-fashioned.

L. L.: I realize the truth of the epigram that in these days one has only the choice between being a mossback and being a mountebank.

R. L.: It will make the intellectual life a very lonely one just now.

L. L.: Tell me when it has not been.

R. L.: And do you find no good in this book, then?

L. L.: Why, yes. I welcome its clear statement of an important problem and its acute analysis of some of our more superficial ills. Most of what Professor Dewey says about our economic situation I find far better expressed, to be sure, in Carlyle's *Past and Present*, and much of his ideal "personal participation in the development of a shared culture" was attained, I think, in ancient Athens —but those things are of the past. There are a hundred sentences in the book which every intelligent reader will applaud, yet the total drift of it is dangerously wrong. And how wrong? Professor Dewey seems to think that all failure or refusal to "generate new conceptions of the ideal and the spiritual" in response to the "challenge of a machine age" must be due to laziness, timidity, sentimental antiquarianism, or self-interest. But it may be due to a conviction, such as he knows nothing about, that the old conceptions referred to something fixed, immutable, eternal, upon which this "machine age" and its so-called challenge have no bearing whatever—a conviction, too, that in abandoning those conceptions we should abandon our individuality, our culture, and all that makes us human.

* * *

If *tertium quid* may be allowed a word in this debate, still continuing in the reviewer's mind, let it be a recollection from the psychology class-room to the effect that the greater part of our thinking is done by the left lobe of the brain.

ODELL SHEPARD

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THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

It is worthy of comment that two of the three "general" titles appearing for the first time in this month's score are books about Russia, making three books concerning that much-discussed country which are currently holding the attention of library book borrowers. Perhaps this means merely that America has calmed down enough to read about Red Russia without "seeing red". It certainly indicates a growing curiosity about and interest in the Soviet social experiment. And just to keep his hand in as a prophet, your reporter ventures the prediction that we shall see many more books about Russia appearing in this veracious chronicle in the coming year. —F. P. S.

NOVELS

1. YEARS OF GRACE	*Margaret Ayer Barnes*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
2. THE BRIDGE OF DESIRE	*Warwick Deeping*	MCBRIDE
3. GRAND HOTEL	*Vicki Baum*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
4. THE ROAD BACK	*Erich Maria Remarque*	LITTLE, BROWN
5. THE GOOD EARTH	*Pearl S. Buck*	JOHN DAY
6. SEED	*Charles G. Norris*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
7. IMPERIAL PALACE	*Arnold Bennett*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
8. THE DEEPENING STREAM	*Dorothy Canfield*	HARCOURT, BRACE
9. FATHER*	*"Elizabeth"*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
10. AMBROSE HOLT AND FAMILY*	*Susan Glaspell*	STOKES
11. MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION*	*Lloyd C. Douglas*	WILLETT, CLARK
12. BACK STREET	*Fannie Hurst*	COSMOPOLITAN

GENERAL

1. EDUCATION OF A PRINCESS	*Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia*	VIKING
2. THE STORY OF SAN MICHELE	*Axel Munthe*	DUTTON
3. HUMANITY UPROOTED	*Maurice Hindus*	CAPE & SMITH
4. GREEN HELL	*Julian Duguid*	CENTURY
5. NEW RUSSIA'S PRIMER*	*M. Ilin*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
6. JUNGLE WAYS	*W. B. Seabrook*	HARCOURT, BRACE
7. THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE	*Sir James Jeans*	MACMILLAN
8. RED BREAD*	*Maurice Hindus*	CAPE & SMITH
9. MY STORY	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	FARRAR & RINEHART
10. LITTLE AMERICA	*Richard E. Byrd*	PUTNAM
11. MY EXPERIENCES IN THE WORLD WAR	*General John J. Pershing*	STOKES
12. DAWN*	*Theodore Dreiser*	LIVERIGHT

* This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.

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ABOUT BOOK-COLLECTING

by Wilfred Partington

End-Papers and Marginalia

London, August.

THE bibliography of Katherine Mansfield is short. There were less than a dozen of her works. They came with the promise of new sunshine on a spring morn: and her all too-brief and fitful day closed in an impressive twilight of collected letters and unpublished remains. But short though her bibliography is—and it has been almost doubled by the admirable work of her husband, Mr. Middleton Murry—it has had a larger share of attention from collectors than that of many authors who wrote more prolifically and even more ambitiously. The collecting-world is not so calculating as its ignorant critics sometimes suggest: the interest in Katherine Mansfield is an example of its impulsive affections. Whatever the morrow may bring forth, the first editions of this artist in the short story are having their collecting appreciation now. The item about which there has been most interest is her *Prelude* (printed by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1918). It began with the publication of *Bibliographies of Modern Authors* (2nd Series) by Mr. and Mrs. Stonehill, who—by the way of Oxford—came from America to set up housekeeping and bookselling in London. In their Bibliography of Katherine Mansfield the *Prelude* was described as "Issued in royal-blue wrappers letters in black on front cover: *Prelude Katherine Mansfield*". An *erratum* slip, however, contained a statement in the following definite terms: "There was an early issue having a design (by J. D. Fergusson) on the front and back wrappers. The wrappers of the later issue are as described. (The compilers are indebted to Mr. J. Middleton Murry for the opportunity of examining his copy of the first issue of this volume)".

Since this statement there has always been a certain amount of controversy on the point. The appearance of a fine copy in a recent catalogue issued by Major Hartley Clark (18, Hertford Street, London, W.1.) once again raised the issue. Major Clark, who specializes in rarities and notable association copies for the most exacting collectors, sent me the following detailed memorandum on the point. "The American booksellers *will* have it that certain copies with a cover design in black by Fergusson constitute a prior issue. I understand that this is not so at all. On the contrary, the design was apparently submitted by Fergusson, approved by Virginia Woolf, and disapproved by Leonard Woolf. The item was finally issued, as had always been intended, with no design on the wrappers; but Mrs. Woolf for her own satisfaction and possibly to try and help Fergusson had this design (of very dubious merit) imprinted on a number of wrappers. If any-

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thing it constitutes a mere afterthought, if not actually a *second* issue." This is equally as definite as the bibliographers' afterthought, as recorded in their *erratum*; and the conflict between the two statements made further investigation desirable. By the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Woolf, I am now able to give the "fountain-head" explanation as set down by Mr. John F. Lehmann, of the Hogarth Press:

> . . . Mr. and Mrs. Woolf were in complete agreement about the matter, and had decided to issue the book without any design; but Katherine Mansfield wished a design by Fergusson to be used. They therefore compromised with her; and issued some with the design, and some without. They were issued simultaneously, so that neither can claim priority. . . ."

This, then, appears to be the Epilogue to the *Prelude*. On the main question Major Hartley Clark's view is correct; and the bibliographical partners may consider the issuing of an *erratum* to their *erratum*. The devil is in the bibliographical business always, though Mr. and Mrs. Stonehill have had some merry triumphs over him.

EDITIONS-DE-LUXE AND DE-LUST

A slim "greenery-yallery" slip of a book may be seen in the bookshops these days. It is entitled *In Spring*; and it may be a portent. The colophon states that the poem thus named is by Edith Sitwell, with 3 wood-engraved decorations by Edward Carrick. "Set up during May MCMXXXI & printed privately for Terence Fytton Armstrong, 60 Frith St., Soho, W.1". In this tail lies another. "Edward Carrick" is the artist son of Gordon Craig, although why he abandoned the honoured patronymic I cannot tell you beyond suggesting one reason: that as the name of Gordon Craig stands for a wonderful and enduring accomplishment both in the art of the theatre and in the art of wood-engraving, young Edward thought he had better carve out his way under his own flag. Every herring should hang by its ain head, as Scott used to say; and anyhow, names never counted for much in the family philosophy of the Terrys and the Craigs; they preferred to live by personality and pluck. So Edward left the sunshine of the paternal villa hard by Florence (and Max Beerbohm) for the smoke and garlic of old Soho. He and his young partner Fytton Armstrong are setting up a press with a view to producing books under the style, probably, of The Carrick Press. The venture will be worth watching. Edward informs me that "one of my ideas is to make the ordinary Editions much better and cheaper; and the Editions-de-Luxe much more de-Luxe. I feel that at present the Private Presses charge *much* too much for their Editions, and the de-Luxe is very seldom worth buying".

I am glad to see that Carrick (otherwise Craig) sees the scope for improvement and variety in the field of Press Books. Those who read, in the former *Bookman's Journal*, my paper on Editions-de-Lust will recall my own ideas on this subject as formed from the viewpoint of the collector. We want a little less de-Luxe and more de-Genius. A vamped-up imprint bearing the high-sounding name of some Press, does not make a worth-while collector's item. There is Eric Gill's *Sculpture* (St. Dominic's Press) for which I paid my humble dollar (published price 5/-) before ever I drank a tankard of beer in friendship with its famous author. There are some of the early Vine Press books containing delightful original poems and hand-coloured cuts. Such as these—and I could name scores—have far more appeal and permanent value than classics, reprinted to death, decked up in expensive (and sometimes shoddy) bindings. I do not care to put on kid gloves either to handle de-Lust editions or this important question.

Edith Sitwell's *In Spring* does not thrill me; and as a book for the collector is not of itself very satisfying. But the printing is all right; and Carrick's wood-engraved title-

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page is a thing of beauty which I can look upon again and again. I can well believe that it took the artist eleven hours to cut it, as he tells me. The Carrick Press should start with bright prospects, backed as it is by training in the very best of schools. As the immediate forerunner of the Press, therefore, as well as for its woodcuts, *In Spring* has its own claim to the attention of collectors. Without it a "run" of Carrick Press books (if we visualize them) would be as sadly incomplete as an English spring without a primrose.

A GORDON CRAIG RARITY

Gordon Craig's son adds, in his letter: "Father is writing books at the moment—one on Granny [E.T.] and one on The Theatre". This is good news; and if the books came out together it would be an embarrassing choice which to take up first, the one on Ellen Terry or t'other. The last time I was with Gordon Craig was early this year when we lunched alone on lamb cutlets and woodcuts in the impressionistic London flat of a theatrical magnate. Craig was to have a theatre, with free scope for his ideas: and he was excited. Playgoers the world over were expectant. But it seems to have been a case of Much Ado about Nothing so far as the theatrical adventurer was concerned; and so Gordon Craig has retired from the scene to put it all into a book, which is the next best thing. Craig's name, like a number of others, does not appear in the table of Demands for Modern Authors. And yet there is probably a surprisingly large proportion of private libraries in which his books have an esteemed place. One of the rarest Craig items is a limited and exquisite issue of thirty signed copies of The Foreword to his *Theatre Advancing*, a work that is without parallel in the literature of the theatre for character and vigour. This limited issue of The Foreword is known to but few collectors; and I have never seen a copy catalogued.

A LIBRARY IN CHAINS

My reference to the collection of chained books in Hereford Cathedral as one of the finest, if not the best, of its kind in the world, appeared in these columns just before it was announced that the work of restoring this famous library had been completed. A hundred years ago the library was moved from one part of the Cathedral to another; and in the re-erection many of the ancient parts were either lost or wrongly put together. It was known that parts of the woodwork had been used elsewhere in the cathedral; and when restoration began recently an exciting hunt for missing pieces took place under the leadership of Canon B. H. Streeter. They turned up in all sorts of unexpected places. An old series of readers' seats were found disguised as pews; one of the presses (bookcases) had been turned into a vestry cupboard; while old carved brackets, cornices and hinges came to light in the most surprising numbers. One of the most interesting discoveries made in the course of the work is that the design of the presses was copied by Sir Thomas Bodley for those which, in 1599, he set up at Oxford. The original 1,482 chains which were taken off during the last century, have been re-fixed to the ancient books, the clasps of which, by an amazing piece of fortune, were all found put away in an old box. The rechained books now fill seven presses completely restored.

SHELLEY'S LETTERS

I have been fascinated for a whole evening spent with Mr. Seymour de Ricci's *Bibliography of Shelley's Letters Published and Unpublished*. What an indigestible mass of names, addresses, numbers, titles and prices does this large octavo book of three hundred pages appear to be at first. But as surely as the arch look of a novelist's adventuress leads to intrigue, so a first glance at this unique book by Mr. de Ricci lures the enquirer into desperate labyrinths of research, the mysteries

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of the higher collecting world, and the dark side-tracks of the literary forger. Think of it! Six hundred of the poet's letters. And Mr. de Ricci's chief aim is to give, so far as herculean labours can make possible, a history of each from the time of writing to the present; the place where each has been printed; and in a very large number of cases, the record is appended of the prices paid for the autographs on their various changes of ownership. All this and much more Mr. de Ricci accomplishes. His method is to group the records of letters under the names of the original recipients (alphabetically arranged), prefacing each section with essential notes on the recipients. Moreover, each letter has the reference number to the *Complete Works of Shelley* edited by Ingpen and Peck; and where an unpublished letter is recorded, there (usually) is to be found the full and exact text of it. Mr. de Ricci may, and probably will, have continuators in his valuable work; but he is the master-researcher, the ardent pioneer who worked this jungle of difficulties. Nor can I omit to say, since it is another token of the spirit of American book-collecting, what a debt we owe to Mr. Carl H. Pforzheimer, himself the owner of a magnificent collection, who by sponsoring the publication made it accessible to the world. I have perhaps said sufficient to indicate how indispensable is this Bibliography to students, to those handling Shelley autographs, and to those who want light on the mysteries of higher collecting. There is one other object of this note: to incite others to emulate the example of Mr. de Ricci, and give us similar Bibliographies of the Letters of Byron, of Scott, and of Burns. Particularly is this desirable in the case of Byron, who both in point of interest as a letter-writer and as regards the ever-increasing scarcity and value of his autographs stands side by side with Shelley. I ought to add that Messrs. Maggs, of Conduit Street, London, W., are, I believe, the sole agents for Mr. de Ricci's *Bibliography of Shelley's Letters*.

"THE COLOPHON"

I am uncertain whether my esteemed predecessor in this Department, my old friend George H. Sargent, called attention here to *The Colophon* (New York) whose career of typographical beauty and novelty and of collecting enthusiasm continues with undiminished zest. If book-collecting in Britain goes a little further back historically than in America, the younger cozen has made wonderful progress since getting into the bibliophilic stride, tempering his fresh zeal in this rare "sport" with a truly astonishing discrimination. And whatever we on this side of the water have done in the making of books, never have we approached such a production as *The Colophon* [reviewed by Robert S. Josephy, in the August BOOKMAN]. In No. 5 I noted particularly the paper on Daumier by Wm. M. Ivins, Jr. (complete with typographical atmosphere); Mr. Paul Johnston on Collecting Prospectuses; and an article on the Marks of the Early Italian Printers. In No. 6 art and the new book rather preponderate; but Mr. Stanley Morison's contribution on Captain Edward Topham, as printed with masterly effect by the Cambridge University Press, is outstanding. The Editorial Trinity, Messrs. Elmer Adler, Burton Emmett, and J. T. Winterich, with their able contributing satellites, are to be congratulated.

FROM MY READERS

Mr. Mark G. Holstein, a New York lawyer, sends me a letter with reference to my article on the Charlotte Brontë forgery, which was exposed in the May BOOKMAN. By a curious coincidence Mr. Holstein was in London when the catalogue describing this alleged Brontë MS was circulated; and on the same day he himself was concerned with "a certain manuscript . . . purchased by a client of mine for a very considerable sum under circumstances such as you describe that it is likely the Brontë MS may at some fu-

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